Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
What's your level of optimism for 2008?

Let your voice be heard!
Go to www.saipantribune.com
to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Iowa Caucus
Candidates competed one last day for victory in the Iowa caucuses—the first statewide vote in the U.S. presidential race.

NATION...Page 22

Bhutto Probe
Scotland Yard will help investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

ASIA...Page 24

They're Back!
Late-night TV hosts returned to the air Wednesday after a two-month hiatus, displaying support for striking writers.

LIFE $ STYLE...Page 32

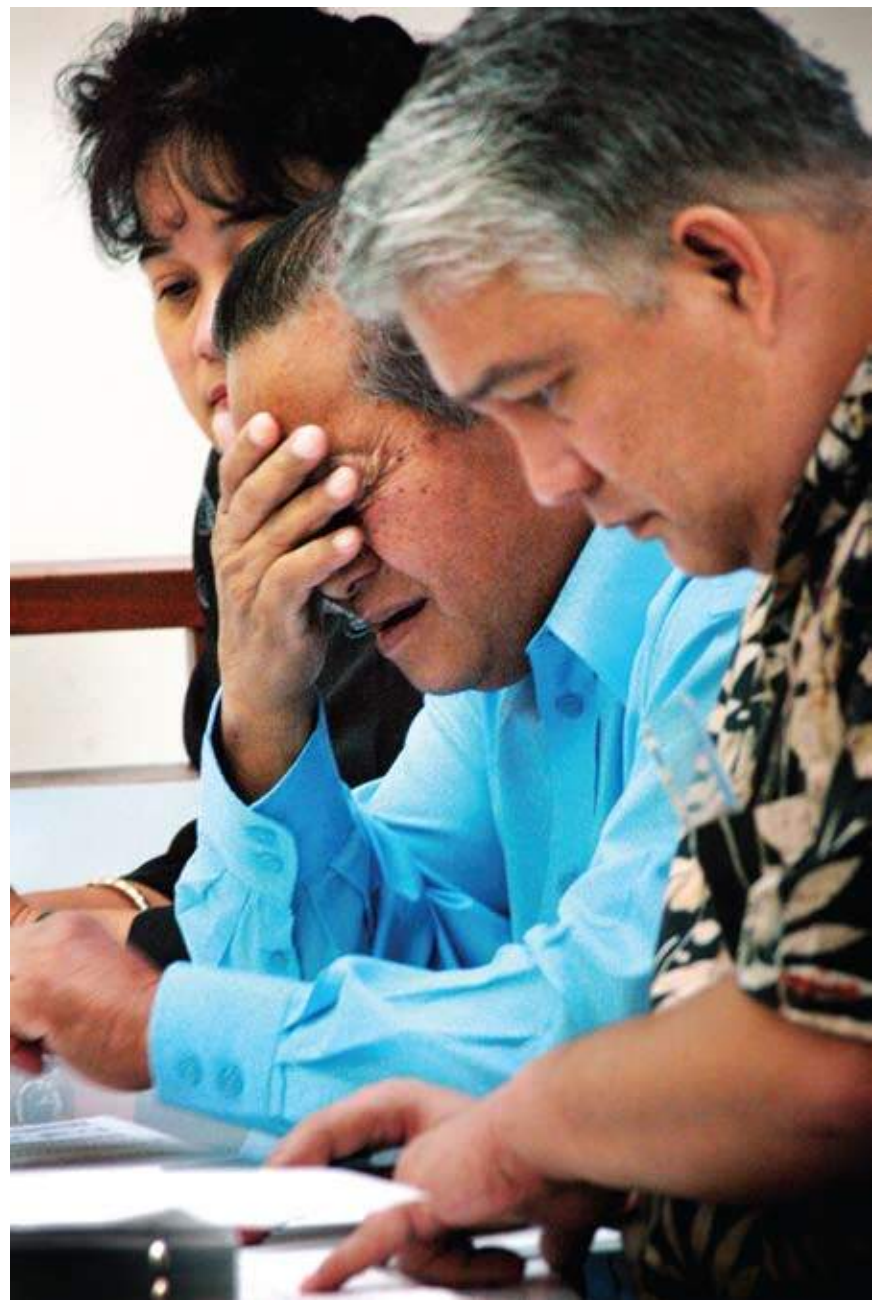
Tree branch triggers widespread outage. PAGE 2
Investigators find truck in hit-and-run incident. PAGE 5

House wants bigger share of budget pie

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The Fitial administration lashed out at the Legislature for giving itself a hefty budget and leaving the central government with too little to work with.

See HOUSE on Page 4



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Finance Secretary Eloy S. Inos reacts while reviewing the long-overdue budget bill for fiscal year 2008 with former special assistant for management and budget Antonio Muna and Special Assistant for Administration Esther Fleming during the bill presentation at the House of Representatives on Capital Hill Thursday.

Reyes to be next Senate president?

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Reyes

A new seating arrangement is reportedly in order for the nine returning senators come Monday, Jan. 14, 2008.

Senate Vice President Pete P. Reyes is poised to take over the top Senate post, a political insider disclosed yesterday.

Felix M. Mendiola, currently the floor leader, will be the new vice president.

Sen. Paul A. Manglona will be the floor leader and Sen. Maria T. Pangelinan will keep her position as legislative

See REYES on Page 4

Drastic drop in car sales in 2007

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Sales of automobiles in the CNMI continued to plummet as economic hardships weighed in on decisions of would-be car buyers in 2007.

Latest figures from the Commonwealth Auto Dealers Association indicate a 36.74-percent drop in vehicle sales from 999 in 2006 to a mere 632 last year.

Like last year, which saw CADA sales drop 35.30 percent from 1,544 units sold in 2005, the current economic crunch—brought about by the continued closures of more garment

See DRASTIC on Page 4

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

A potential customer checks out the engines of cars on display.

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Local

Tree branch triggers outage

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

A part of a tree falling on a high voltage power line in Chalan Piao plunged the entire southern part of Saipan into darkness Wednesday night.

The outage occurred at 10:15pm. With the exception of one street where the affected high voltage wire was located, power was restored to all grids at 1:15am yesterday.

"We had a something less than a tree and larger than a branch fall on a high voltage line in Chalan Piao at the MGM Garment Factory," according to Commonwealth Utilities Corp. spokesperson Pamela Mathis.

Mathis

That caused a power outage on one electrical grid, but it also took down the Chalan Kiya Substation, which supplies power to all three electrical grids for the entire southern part of the island.

"For quite a while there was no known cause. The linemen did not find any problem. There was no transformer problem. They did not see anything obvious because it's down a very dark street," she said.

Mathis said she immediately put out a radio announcement regarding a field problem.

"We knew it was not a power plant problem but we had a very hard time finding the problem. So ultimately some customers called in after the radio announcement and directed us to the scene. They also had the engineering staff of the substation to reset everything there," she said.

Healthy New Year's Tips for People with Diabetes -
Good Advice for Everyone

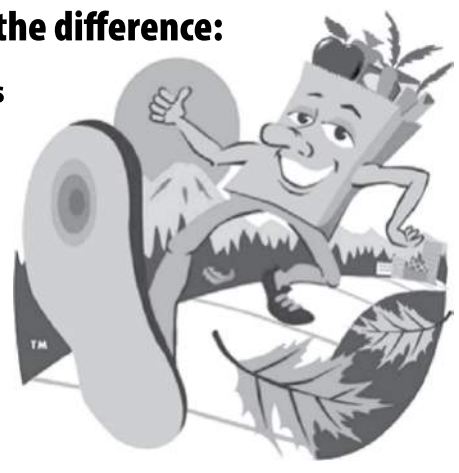
While the holidays bring to mind many things, like parties, gift giving and especially eating, the New Year strikes quite a different tone: resolutions, exercise, diet and good intentions.

Eating right and staying healthy is a year-long challenge for everyone.

How can you help someone you love make the right diet and exercise choices without feeling deprived?

These easy tips may make all the difference:

- ❤ Plan ahead for healthy snacks between meals to curb the urge to overeat
- ❤ Look for healthier desserts
- ❤ Exercise together
- ❤ Don't be the food police—Be supportive and caring—not judgmental (be positive and encouraging)
- ❤ Lead by example



Healthy eating doesn't have to be a battle. Get the whole family involved to ensure that everyone has a happy and healthy new year.

Remember, you CAN prevent diabetes.

To learn more, please contact the Division of Public Health Diabetes Prevention & Control Program at 664-4030/1

Hyatt is top MVA contributor for 2007

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Hyatt Regency Saipan was the top contributor to the war chest of the Marianas Visitors Authority last year, donating approximately $38,418 in in-kind and monetary donations to the islands' tourist body in 2007.

"We all know we know we have to do whatever we can to help MVA promote the CNMI. It doesn't really have enough money to do the job it is supposed to do so the best way to support MVA is by sponsoring complimentary rooms whenever they have FAM trips coming in and media trips coming in," said Hyatt Regency Saipan general manager Michael von Siebenthal.

"That's how we can support them best instead of charging them for rooms we give them rooms for free. Every so often, we also give free meals for these FAM and media tours in order to help MVA do its job," he added.

Kumho Asiana was last year's top airline contributor with $18,000 in in-kind and monetary donations in 2007.

The carrier made a big splash last year with its Feb. 28, 2007, acquisition of the sprawling LaoLao Bay Golf Resort property in Kagman and its subsequent $100-million resort development plan.

In the restaurant category, Capricciosa and Tony Roma's topped the list with $380, while support services and optional tours were led by Kingfisher Golf Links and SandCastle Saipan with contributions of $5,340 and $6,022, respectively,

Capricciosa and Tony Roma's general manager Akira Onishi said his company is always ready to help MVA out.

House wants OPA's 1 percent budget share restored

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The Office of the Public Auditor may continue to receive 1 percent of each agency's budget under the fiscal year 2008 appropriation bill now pending before the House of Representatives.

House Bill 15-328 proposes a budget of $3 million for OPA. This is nearly three times the governor's proposed funding for the agency, which is a little over $1 million.

In his budget submission, the governor sought a lump sum payment of $500,000 to OPA for all General Fund activities. Add to this the 1 percent fee from the Public School System, Northern Marianas College, Marianas Visitors Authority, and the Department of Public Lands, and OPA will have a total budget of $1.076 million.

This amount is the minimum allowed by the Constitution. The cap was set in 1985, when the total CNMI budget was $58 million, including federal funds.

Public Auditor Michael S. Sablan had warned about the potentially damaging effect of the governor's proposal.

"OPA makes agencies and departments accountable, thereby preserving public trust in CNMI government institutions. Moreover, OPA's investigations, which have led to several successful prosecutions of government corruption and white collar crime, have a deterrent effect that should not be underestimated. How does one quantify the value of the deterrent effect or the preservation of the public trust in government?" he said.

Under the House bill, 1 percent of each agency's funding will go to OPA, as it did in the past.

The appropriation bill also adopts budgets previously set by autonomous agencies.

The NMI Retirement Fund will have a budget of $78.32 million, and the Group Health and Life Insurance, $10.25 million. The Commonwealth Development Authority will have a spending limit of $1.14 million, and the NMI Housing Corporation, $2.05 million.

The budgets of the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. have yet to be determined.

ART CLASS CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Some students of the Grace Christian Academy School undergo a free five-day art class session during the Christmas break. They are shown here being monitored by workshop facilitator, artist Benjie Ganapin. The students were encouraged to enhance and use their creativity to create works of art. ***See story on Page 9.***

TOP CONTRIBUTORS CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hyatt Regency Saipan general manager Michael von Siebenthal, sixth from left, is joined by representatives from other top 2007 contributors of the Marianas Visitors Authority on stage—Kumho Asiana, Capricciosa and Tony Roma's, Kingfisher Golf Links, and SandCastle Saipan—and MVA officials led by its chairman Jerry Tan, extreme right. ***See story on Page 3.***

HOUSE

From Page 1

Antonio Muna, a financial consultant to the governor, said he was very disappointed with the budget bill, as introduced by Rep. Edwin Aldan yesterday.

House Bill 15-328, the appropriation bill now under consideration by the House of Representatives, proposes a budget of $9.15 million for the Legislature in fiscal year 2008.

This amount is nearly double the $4.6 million proposed by the governor. It is also nearly 30 percent greater than the $6.5 million the Legislature spent last fiscal year.

The budget bill also sets legislative funding at the maximum levels allowed by the Constitution. The Senate president will receive $200,000, and the House speaker $250,000. Each member will get $155,000. Even the Legislative Bureau will get funding cap level of $2 million.

The governor requests lawmakers to reduce their own funding to $60,000 for each member, and to $175,000 for each presiding officer.

"This budget reflects a 'take-care-of-me-first' type of attitude. Their needs are taken care of, while everybody else has to fend for themselves. This is unsatisfactory," Muna said in an interview.

He noted that the Legislature proposes to give non-Executive Branch agencies $5.4 million more than what was proposed by the governor.

Even with this increase, Marianas Visitors Authority will have $2 million less under the House budget bill than under the governor's budget package.

The governor wants to increase MVA's budget to $8.4 million this fiscal year to support the tourism agency's advertising activities. But the House bill sets MVA's budget at $6.17 million only.

"Basically, the Legislature is taking the lion's share of that $5.4 million increase to non-Executive Branch units," Muna said.

Among other non-Executive Branch agencies that will see an increase from the governor's proposal are the Judicial Branch, from $4.2 million to $4.8 million; the Washington Representative's Office, from $723,000 to $953,000; Rota municipal government, from $7.7 million to $8.2 million; and the Tinian municipal government, from $6.8 million to $8.2 million.

Meanwhile, the Executive Branch will get $81.25 million under the House budget bill. This represents a cut of $5.7 million from the governor's request.

The Executive Branch includes essential public services such as health, public safety, corrections, labor and immigration.

Muna said that in addition to these costs, the Executive Branch may need $2 million to subsidize utility fuel and the $3-million shortfall incurred by the government's health insurance plan as of Oct. 31, 2007.

"Now the question is, how much will the legislative and judicial branches contribute to this? Are you just going to put it all on the shoulder of the Executive Branch?" he asked.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Reps. Absalon V. Waki Jr. and Jacinta M. Kaipat confer with Finance Secretary Eloy S. Inos, former special assistant for management and budget Antonio Muna and special assistant for administration Esther Fleming as they prepare for the presentation of the long-overdue budget bill for fiscal year 2008 at the House of Representatives on Capita Hill Thursday.

DRASTIC

From Page 1

factories coupled with the rise in utility rates—are being blamed as the culprit behind the decline in figures.

CADA figures in 2007 have been the lowest since sales in the Northern Marianas began its downward spiral in 1997.

After a high of 3,091 units sold that year, only 2,447 were bought in 1998 followed by 849 in 1999. Although sales would rebound to 995 in 2000 and then again the next two years—1,004 in 2001 and 1,559 in 2002—sales dropped to 904 in 2003 but picked up again in 2004 with 1,612 units sold.

In 2005, 1,544 vehicles were sold by Microl Corp., Joeten Motors, and Triple J. Motors.

Of the paltry 632 units sold last year by the three members automobile dealers of CADA, 326 were cars, 87 were trucks, 65 were vans, and 154 were sport utility vehicles.

Joeten Motors had the biggest drop in sales among the three CADA members, registering a 43.31-percent decrease from 314 units sold in 2006 to just 178 last year. The automobile dealer was able to sell 85 cars, 39 trucks, 23 vans, and 31 SUVS last year.

Triple J. Motors experienced a 36.5-percent loss in units sold, from 263 vehicles disposed in 2006 to 167 units sold in 2007. Broken down, Triple J Motors sold 78 cars, 15 trucks, eight vans, and 66 SUVs in 2007.

Microl Corp. had a 31.99-percent decline in sales after only 287 units drove out of its Oleai showroom last year, compared to 422 in 2006. A total of 163 cars, 33 trucks, 34 vans, and 57 SUVS were snapped up by Microl Corp.'s customers last year.

REYES

From Page 1

secretary, said the source, who asked not to be named.

Asked for confirmation, Reyes expressed confidence that he has enough supporters to unseat Senate President Joseph M. Mendiola.

"I feel that I have the numbers to become the president," Reyes said.

He also said he and his allies would ensure that each member has a committee to head, in order to avoid having a "minority bloc." Such has been the setup over the past two years.

"We want to have everyone join in, and to maintain harmony in the Senate," he said.

Mendiola, who had expressed a desire to keep the Senate presidency, seems unperturbed about the development.

"If he has the numbers, there's nothing anybody can do. I give him my blessing," he said.

The source also said that chairpersons have been selected for four of the nine Senate committees.

Sen. Maria Pangelinan will head the Fiscal Affairs Committee, Sen. Jude Hofschneider the Committee on Resources, Development and Programs, Sen. Paterno Hocog the Committee on Executive Appointments and Governmental Investigations, and Sen. Felix Mendiola the Committee on Federal Relations.

Sen. Joseph Mendiola secured the Senate presidency two years ago after the Covenant Party formed a six-member alliance with three other senators. Composing the alliance were Sens. Joseph Mendiola, Felix Mendiola and Henry San Nicolas of the Covenant Party, Democrat Maria Pangelinan, Republican Paterno Hocog, and then independent candidate Pete Reyes.

BREAKTHROUGH IN DANDAN HIT-AND-RUN

Investigators find truck, victim recovers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

An arrest is expected anytime soon in connection with the hit-and-run accident in Dandan where a mother of three was seriously injured.

The victim, Milet McEntee, 44, has now fully recovered from her injuries and is back on Saipan to continue her work as customer service representative at the Western Union Garapan Branch.

Sources at the Department of Public Safety disclosed yesterday that investigators were just trying to wrap up their report. Sources said police investigators recovered on Nov. 17, 2007, the vehicle that struck McEntee's car.

The truck was found at a private property in Dandan, sources said, adding that investigators had already questioned a person who admitted being the owner of the vehicle.

In an interview with *Saipan Tribune* yesterday, McEntee confirmed that she already saw the vehicle, which was impounded at DPS.

McEntee said she is very happy upon learning that police officers have been working on her case.

"When I learned before that police had no good leads, honestly, I lost my trust and confidence in DPS. I just learned that the police officers have been working on it," she said.

McEntee said she is also very appreciative of her employer, Juan T. Guerrero, for being supportive. Guerrero shouldered all the victim's expenses at the Commonwealth Health Center and at the Manila Doctors Hospital.

On Nov. 10, 2007, McEntee was transferred to Manila Doctors Hospital where she was found to be suffering from dehydration and poor nutrition. She was also diagnosed to have acquired hospital infection.

After several X-rays were conducted, doctors found small amount of water in her left lung and she had liver abscess.

McEntee's recovery in Manila lasted for a week. She arrived back on Saipan on Dec. 26 to reunite with her three children and husband.

Before being flown to Manila, McEntee underwent surgery at CHC for internal injuries to the abdomen on Oct. 28, two days after the accident. She was also diagnosed to have developed a liver infection.

The incident happened on Dandan Main Road on Oct. 26 at 11:08pm.

Preliminary investigation showed that a pickup truck along the northbound lane entered the southbound lane and collided with the McEntees' sedan, then fled the scene heading south.

The husband, Charlie McEntee, suffered swollen neck and vision difficulties and abrasion on the right knee. Their eight-year-old daughter had a swollen face and bruises on the arms.

The victims' car—a 1992 Hyundai Elantra—had extensive damage to the front and left body area.

The victims were on their way home from a laundry shop when the accident happened.

CDA loaned out $1.87M in 2007

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

The year 2007 was a year of accomplishments for the Commonwealth Development Authority.

The agency approved a total of $1,870,617 in direct and guaranteed loans for the entire year and implemented programs to help old and new borrowers become more educated in owning a business and making payments on time.

These were just some of the highlights presented during a three-hour dialogue that CDA held Friday at the American Memorial Park's Visitor Center.

The purpose of the meeting was to highlight CDA's accomplishments for the year 2007 and to have members of the community voice their concerns.

Acting board chair Pedro Itibus said that CDA formed strategic alliances with stakeholders in 2007 under newly adopted CDA strategic plans.

The agency strengthened its alliance with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce and became an "active member of the Small Business Development and Economic Development Committees."

In February, CDA filed with the IRS the Private Activity Bond Volume Cap Certificate. Itibus said CDA refunded the series 2000A and Series 2003A General obligation bonds that were closed in April.

"This reduced service costs by $7.8 million over the life of the outstanding bonds, net of all cost of issuance," Itibus said.

In October, CDA shared the conference expenses for the 2007 Conference on Business Opportunities in the islands held in Guam.

The agency also submitted to the Legislature its report on the direct economic benefits of the Qualifying Certificate Program.

CDA observed austerity Fridays through September 2007. And in mid-November, the majority of the administration offices moved to the first floor, reducing office rental costs.

In January, CDA approved the implementation of the Debt Relief Program and Loan Payment Coupon.

Finally in June, CDA co-sponsored four business workshops in observance of Small Business Development Month and also launched the Business Mentoring Program.

CDA officials, borrowers, small business owners, and other members of the community attended the Friday meeting.

Attendees were given the opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions on CDA's upcoming plans for the year 2008.

CDA's purpose, as enacted by public law 4-49, is to stimulate the economic development in the Northern Marians Islands. CDA's mission is to provide appropriate financial and technical assistance to facilitate the start-up or expansion of private and public enterprises for their success, the benefit of the Commonwealth's economic welfare and the long-term sustainability of the CDA.

CDA officials include Oscar Camacho, Marcie Tomokane, Pedro Itibus, Oscar Quitugua, Manny Sablan, and Edwin Hofschneider.

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'Officers' promotion to two ranks higher possible'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

It is very possible that a police officer can get promoted to two ranks higher than his or her previous position, according to Department of Public Safety commissioner Rebecca Warfield yesterday.

Warfield said there have been no promotions in the department for so long. "So arguably, individuals have been passed over for appropriate promotions, and now they get the appropriate promotion. That's very possible," she said.

The DPS commissioner explained the department's promotion process in response to concerns of some police officers about the promotion of a certain officer from the rank of police officer 2 to police sergeant.

Some officers told Saipan Tribune that they don't have anything against the officer, but the way the promotion with corresponding pay was done has caused demoralization within the ranks.

"The officer is now getting $30,000. I thought there is no money?" one officer asked.

Warfield said the promotion has been a longstanding issue in the department.

"I think that some of those complaints are legitimate. I think that there are officers who haven't been promoted since they left the police academy. And it's been many, many years since we had a police academy," Warfield said.

She said she is working now on justifying more promotions of police officers.

"Hopefully there will be funding available for it. Because I do believe that promotions are necessary. And I believe that promotions should be made with the appropriate pay," she said.

The commissioner said the government is financially broke and that some people have a difficult time grasping it because in the past the Commonwealth had a lot of money. "But with tourism down, with the garment industry's down…what I've been trying to do is saved money in other areas so that I would be able to pay the promotions," she explained.

Warfield said the Office of Management and Budget has been assisting her.

"They have been trying to assist me with regards to working the numbers to be able to make that happen. So I really have to watch my budget and to make sure that the money will be there," she said.

Warfield said there are a lot of officers in the department who deserves promotion with pay.

"And I want to get that for them. So it is not just one officer. I believe that there are more officers deserving of promotion as well. And it just happened a little bit at a time," she said.

The commissioner disclosed that they are working on a standardized promotion process right now.

She said Police Captain Dolores San Nicolas recently joined the department to work on the process in conjunction with the Northern Marianas College.

NMI Crime Stoppers joins global fight vs trafficking

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

The NMI Crime Stoppers Program has joined the Crime Stoppers International's focus to fight this year a global menace—trafficking.

NMI Crime Stoppers Program Board chair Jim Arenovski said yesterday that the 2008 Crime Stoppers International's theme is anti-trafficking.

"Whether it involves drugs, weapons, or humans, trafficking is a global issue. It requires a heightened level of involvement by all law enforcement officials," said Arenovski in reading a proclamation declaring January as NMI Crime Stoppers Month.

In signing the proclamation, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial urged everyone to utilize the tip line in reporting criminal activities and help the community and law enforcement "bring security and safety to residents and visitors alike."

Although Customs employees, Immigration officers and other law enforcement agencies are on the front line in the fight against trafficking, Arenovski said citizens may also notice or have information relating to illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons and or people.

"The CNMI government has no tolerance for the trafficking of people or illegal weapons or drugs, and we encourage our entire community to help us in the fight against trafficking," Arenovski said.

He noted that there are currently over 20 unsolved homicides in the NMI, while burglaries and copper wire theft cases continue to rise.

"DPS needs information from the public to help solve these and countless other crimes," the board chairman said.

He said 2008 will be a "banner year" for Crime Stoppers.

This year, he said, they will be taking another step forward by not only going to schools but also to the villages by opening up forums in which the public are invited to come and ask questions about the Crime Stoppers Program.

DPS remains without an NMI Crime Stoppers Program coordinator since Police Officer 1 Tony Diaz resigned from DPS on Nov. 19, 2007.

Arenovski said former coordinator Sgt. Tom Bas has been assisting other DPS personnel in helping the program until a new coordinator is designated.

DPS Commissioner Rebecca Warfield admitted that they are not exactly certain as to when they are going to appoint an officer specifically for the program.

"Right now our officers are spread a little bit. But right now we are able to provide coverage in Koblerville and Kagman to make sure that those communities are protected," Warfield said.

When the DPS manpower situation changes, the commissioner said, they will be able to appoint one officer to Crime Stoppers.

"We really need our officers out on the streets and out in the community as opposed to doing administrative work," she said.

Warfield said ultimately they would like to get an officer as Crime Stoppers coordinator.

"I truly believe in the program. We provide any support that they say they need because information is power. And the power lies with the people. They empower us to do our job," she added.

Measure giving power over Tinian CIP to mayor nixed

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has vetoed a bill allowing the Tinian mayor to manage funds for capital improvement projects on the island.

House Bill 15-308 proposed to provide the expenditure authority by amending an appropriation measure for the implementation of Covenant Section 702 CIP plan for fiscal year 1999.

"The bill's intent granting expenditure authority to the mayor of Tinian for projects appropriated for the Second Senatorial District is irrelevant as there were no projects appropriated for Second Senatorial District in Public Law 11-78," Fitial said in his veto message.

"Even if there were projects appropriated, the secretary of the Department of Public Works is best suited to manage and oversee CIP projects to ensure compliance with technical requirements," added Fitial.

Rep. Edwin Aldan authored the disapproved bill. The House of Representatives passed it on first and final reading on Oct. 3, 2007, followed by the Senate on Nov. 13, 2007.

The bill states that "the efficient administration of the expenditure authority and coordination of capital improvement projects in the Second Senatorial District under Public Law 11-78 should rest with the Office of the Mayor."

Accordingly, it proposed to transfer to the mayor expenditure authority for all Tinian projects, excluding those by the Public School System, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, and Commonwealth Ports Authority. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

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Ex-convict gets 18 mos. for copper wire theft

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed an 18-month prison term on an ex-convict who conspired with other persons to steal copper wires at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s well sites at the Saipan International Airport.

Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo sentenced Sylvan A. Pua to five years in prison, all suspended except for 18 months, for theft.

Following a plea agreement, Govendo gave Pua credit for the time he had served in jail since Feb. 9, 2007.

The defendant was also sentenced to a total of 12 months in prison for his violation of probation in two other previous criminal convictions. The sentence shall run concurrently with the other sentence in the copper wire theft case, according to the judge. This means that the total jail term slapped on Pua for the theft case and two violations of probation is 18 months.

Govendo said Pua will be placed on probation and required to pay a $25 court assessment fee and a $250 fine.

Govendo ordered the defendant to write a letter of apology to CUC and perform 250 hours of community work service.

"Defendant shall undergo counseling and submit to treatment deemed appropriate upon an evaluation by the Community Guidance Center and abide by the terms of such treatment," the judge said in his written order issued yesterday.

Govendo said Pua shall cooperate with the investigators and testify for the government against his co-defendants.

The Attorney General's Office charged Pua in February 2007, with conspiracy to commit theft, theft, and criminal mischief.

He and counsel Loren A. Sutton signed a plea agreement with the government, represented by assistant attorney general Joseph L. G. Taijeron Jr.

Pua pleaded guilty to theft and admitted violating his probation in two other cases.

The remaining charges were dismissed.

On Sept. 9, 2006, Pua and another person used a "hot stick" to shut power off from a transformer on a power pole in the vicinity of the Airport Tower at the Saipan Airport.

Pua and the other person cut and rolled power lines from the power poles, later selling them and split the sum of $600.

Also charged in the copper wire incident were Jason Mad, Fanis Denziro, and Gloyd Martin.

Meanwhile, Superior Court associate judge David A. Wiseman issued a bench warrant for the arrest of a convict who failed to show up at yesterday's sentencing hearing.

Wiseman imposed no bail for Simon Sebuu.

Only Sebuu's counsel assistant public defender Malik Edwards and assistant attorney general Melissa Simms appeared at the hearing.

The court had twice granted Sebuu's request to postpone the sentencing as he cited family rosary and the Christmas holiday as reasons.

Sebuu was also arrested before for not appearing at a court hearing.

Sebuu was charged with burglary, theft, and criminal mischief for burglarizing the Little Angels Day Care in Koblerville. In November 2007, the jury acquitted the defendant of burglary but Wiseman found him guilty of theft and criminal mischief.

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Cross Island Project hits snag

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

The long-anticipated Cross Island Project that would create a new highway from San Vicente to Capital Hill has yet to start due to a private lot that lies in the way of the construction site.

Public Works Secretary Jose Demapan said the private land needs to be acquired before the government can start construction work.

Demapan said the private lot is about 200 square meters. "It's not very big but we need that for the ponding area."

According to the Department of Public Lands, they have already offered an amount to the landowner but the landowner is seeking monetary compensation and does not agree with the "time of taking."

As far as construction goes, "we are ready for the project," Demapan said. "But the Federal Highway Administration needs that clearing of right-of-way before we do construction," he added.

Phase one of the $12 million federally funded Cross Island Project was supposed to have been DPW's biggest project of 2007.

DPW has met with federal highway's representatives from Hawaii to discuss plans for the project.

Henry K. Pangelinan Engineering Co. designed phase 1 of the highway construction at the back road.

With this project, DPW expects an increase of economic growth in the CNMI as not only residents would benefit the road but also tourists, considering the scenic sites in the location.

Under the Cross Island Project, a three-lane highway will be constructed from San Vicente round house all the way to Capital Hill.

Phase 1 is constructing of the road from San Vicente round house up to Blue Tank in Papago. There would be two lanes going up and one lane going down.

Municipal council tackles erosion at Micro Beach

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

The Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council recently held a public forum on the Micro Beach erosion problem and facility improvements at the American Memorial Park ampitheater.

Council chair Marian DLG Tudela said she was impressed by the park's commitment to finding an alternative location for the beach park facilities that she says are in danger of collapsing due to the unceasing erosion at Micro Beach.

"The entire facility next to the collapsed pathway would have to be relocated soon or suffer the same fate as the walkway so long as the beach sand movement continues its natural course," Tudela said.

In addition, the council is recommending that the toilet be relocated to a more stable ground at a site most convenient for beach goers.

One of the suggestions given by those in the audience at the forum was to place an underwater buffer to reduce wave activity descending on the shoreline.

"The suggestion to engage in periodic sand nourishment of the beach is probably the most effective containment measure against erosion."

Coastal Resource Management's Kathy Yuknavage said that CRM's idea to replace the relapsing encasement at the swimming cove is "quite doable."

Tudela suggested to Park Service and Coastal Resource Management experts to craft a plan of action with multiple mitigation strategies and estimated itemized cost breakdown, including project implementation schedule.

This way, she explained, "we could schedule a series of presentations before appropriate local and federal funding agencies early next year."

Tudela also said the council expressed support to CRM's proposal to find a Coastal Resource Management engineer who can make an assessment of the erosion problem and propose viable remedies to the longstanding erosion problem at Micro Beach.

"Obviously everyone wants to have a beach maintained against the unceasing erosion occurring at Micro Beach for many years now, chipping away not only the pathway, but also the toilet facility, towering pine trees and palm trees, cultural artifacts and above all the pristine sandy beach at Micro," Tudela said.

The council thanked Yuknavage for sharing her "longitudinal study of the erosion problem at the Micro Beach."

Upon closing, they also expressed their desire to work with CRM and the Park Service "in taking timely concrete steps toward restoring the aesthetic and pristine ambience at Micro Beach," Tudela said.

Cat up for adoption in good homes

Paul Newman is trying to find a new home. His family is leaving the island and is unable to bring him with them. PAWS is trying to help the family place the cat in a responsible and loving home.

Newman

Paul Newman gets his name from his sky-blue eyes. A 3-year-old neutered male, his family calls him "Mr. Independence." He weighs about 10 pounds. He's an indoor-outdoor cat. He's favorite hobbies are eating and sleeping. He is great at catching and eating mice. He likes to be petted but not cuddled, and he talks a lot! He is a boonie cat that looks exactly like a Siamese.

If you are interested in adopting or fostering Paul Newman, email Zoe at zaschorr@hotmail.com, Susan at sfschorr@hotmail.com, and/or Katie at busenkell@gmail.com. You may also contact Susan at (cell) 483-8736 or (work) 236-8376.

For more information on Saipan's animals, visit www.paws-saipan.blogspot.com. ***(PAWS)***

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Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 04, 2001

Tobacco settlement funds missing?
Where has the money gone? Lawmakers are now wondering what ever happened to the over $800,000 received by the CNMI government so far as its share from the multi-billion dollar tobacco settlement. House Ways and Means Committee chair Rep. Antonio M. Camacho has called Finance Sec. Lucy DLG. Nielsen to shed light on the matter following an inquiry from the Health and Welfare Committee chair Rep. Malua T. Peter.

Funds scarce for housing projects
Some 45 families may never achieve their dream of owning a home as the Koblerville housing project remains in limbo following difficulties in getting funds to complete much-needed infrastructure improvement. The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation is appealing to the Senate to approve appropriation of $2.4 million to install sewer, power and water as well as road infrastructure within the housing project -- funding that has been pending for months.

Teno keeps hands off as Senate attempts new talks with House
Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio refused anew to step into the budget imbroglio in the Legislature as the Senate reached out to the House for possible resumption of talks on the FY 2001 spending measure which the latter called off last week. In an interview with reporters, the local chief executive said he has submitted his budget proposal to the lawmakers and it's up to them now how to divide the pie.

January 04, 2002

Fund investments up $18.7-M
Despite the US recession, overseas investments of the Northern Mariana Islands Retirement Fund jumped-unexpectedly-by about 5.9 percent in November 2001, giving the Fund's overseas portfolio $18.7 million in earnings. The Fund's investments in Asia also posted a healthy $1.35-million growth from October 31 to November 30 last year, pushing the portfolio's value from $7.72 million to $9.07 million.

DPW to remove waste from shore
The Department of Public Works has already pinpointed a particular site where a stockpile of hazardous waste - automotive batteries, transformers possibly containing polychlorinated biphenyls and 55-gallon drums allegedly containing waste oil - may be relocated far enough from the shoreline in Tanapag, where it has been dumped for several months. The site is located at DPW's technical services parking lot in Lower Base, according to Solid Waste Program Manager Alberta Carpenter.

CPA negotiating with 3 new carriers
The Commonwealth Ports Authority will continue negotiations with three major airline companies to help revive the local tourism industry from a deep slump caused by the September 11 crash attacks on the US. CPA Executive Director Carlos H. Salas said negotiations are ongoing between three airline executives and the agency for a possible China-CNMI air service.

January 04, 2003

Senate ponders 'cut work-hour' plan
Senate members are keeping an open mind about the lower House proposal to cut government work hours by an hour daily, but are seeking assurance that the scheme-if implemented-would not imperil essential public services. Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero particularly offered his support to the legislative initiative, optimistic over the millions of savings that the government is projected to make. Some $19.5 million savings is expected in one year, according to the House's projection.

CUC abandons contaminated wells
The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has abandoned three well fields on Saipan following findings of chemical contaminants. CUC water division manager Jess Castro said that TCE-a solvent associated with laundry chemical-was found in the wells located in Susupe, Oleai, and Garapan.

Saipan firm fined $26K for pesticide violations

HONOLULU—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recently settled with Japan Water Systems of Capitol Hill, Saipan, for $26,000 for allegedly distributing an unregistered water disinfectant in violation of federal pesticide laws.

The EPA cited the company for allegedly selling and distributing an unregistered water disinfectant "Tosoh Cube." The product, a 12 percent sodium hypochlorite solution, was imported from Japan and sold to hotels and other businesses in Saipan for private water system disinfection. The products, labeled almost entirely in Japanese, lacked directions for use, precautionary statements, and other labeling required by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.

"In order for a company to sell a disinfectant, it must be registered with the EPA," said Katherine Taylor, associate director for the EPA Pacific Southwest region's Communities and Ecosystems Division. "Registration ensures that the products will have proper labeling, including instructions, warnings, and first aid information. Without the required label, there's no way for a consumer to know how to use the product effectively, or to protect themselves from harm."

The company discontinued all sales of the unregistered product, and shipped it back to Japan. Existing customers were notified to discontinue use of the product.

Sodium hypochlorite is an extremely corrosive disinfectant that, at its full strength, can cause severe damage to the eyes and skin. Disinfectants are considered pesticides under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, which regulates the production, distribution, and use of pesticides within the United States.

Distributors and retailers are responsible for ensuring that all pesticides distributed in the U.S. fully comply with federal pesticide regulations. Both the EPA and CNMI DEQ have increased enforcement efforts on the island to ensure compliance with federal pesticide law and the CNMI pesticide regulations.

For more information on what types of products are regulated as pesticides under the federal law, visit: http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/about/.

Information on pesticide regulation and enforcement is available at: http://www.epa.gov/compliance/civil/fifra/.

The CNMI DEQ's pesticide program is online at: http://www.deq.gov.mp/article.aspx?secID=7&artID=46. ***(EPA)***

Fundraisers in the works to help Wakai Nekko

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

Wakai Nekko No Kai's president Hideo Kato is happy to announce that through his "wonderful friends from Japan," he was able to pay a considerable amount to help keep his mortgage before the deadline.

According to Mayor's Office public information officer Tony Benavente, one of Japan's major baseball teams stepped up to the plate and "really supported him."

Only $100,000 remains to clear Kato of his financial difficulty, Benavente said.

To help earn that money, "Friends of Wakai Nekko" on Saipan are holding fundraisers this month.

Registration will start next week for the first fundraising event. The first event will be a 10K marathon, full marathon, and a half marathon that will be held at the Micro Beach on Jan. 19.

On Jan. 23, a golf tournament will be held at the Coral Ocean Point. And because the all-day tournament will be held on a weekday, Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela said, "I will ask the governor to give administrative leave for secretaries, directors and other government employees to participate in the event."

"We will provide the governor with the list of names of the players that have signed up so maybe at least those people can play to help us earn the money we need to save our long-time friends," Tudela said.

Another plan that Saipan's "Friends of Wakai Nekko" has up their sleeve is to ask SAIWAI (Saipan Walking Association) to donate the proceeds of their Valentine's Day walkathon in February to the cause.

According to Benavente, "If everything goes well, we will be able to raise $40,000 to $50,000. We may even reach our cap at $60,000."

Wakai Nekko No Kai allows CNMI students to participate in its annual, three to four day voyage.

Tudela is asking students, alumni, government officials, and other community members to take part in "this important cause."

Representatives and officials from the Mayor's Office, Marianas Visitor's Authority, Northern Marianas College, Pacific Development Inc., Commonwealth Ports Authority, and the American Memorial Park are all taking part in ensuring that visits from the ocean university will continue on Saipan and not become "a thing of the past."

For the past 39 years, the ocean university has brought more than 16,000 Japanese visitors to the CNMI and Guam.

Last year, 275 Japanese students paid a four-day visit to the island.

GCA students use Christmas break to learn more about art

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

Artist Benjie Ganapin held a free five-day art class session for the students at Grace Christian Academy School.

The students were asked to bring their own supplies and were taught basic skills in painting using watercolor and oil, among other media.

The students were encouraged to enhance and use their creativity to create works of art.

Part of the program, according to Ganapin, was a visit to the gallery of the CNMI Arts Council for the students to gain inspiration by seeing the artworks of some local artists.

GCA student CJ Pantaleon said she wants to do a painting and sell it for $60,000.

"Good to hear from them that they are seeing themselves as CNMI's tomorrow's artists and their career as an artist is so promising," GCA principal Faith Dela Rosa said.

GCA hopes that the students' artworks will be ready for public viewing some time in January 2008.

The students' paintings consisted of island scenery showing off their own symbolic and stylized paintings.

The future artists of CNMI are AJ & CJ Pantaleon, Joshua and Leila Arroyo, Marjony Camacho, Peter Camacho, Paula Talibong, Leah Fabila, Cheska Dalusung, Vyela and Ezra Cervera. These are 2nd graders to 5th graders.

"As young as they are, you could really see their potentials and the CNMI culture in arts will go on. The parents are so supportive and proud of their children," Dela Rosa said.

During their visit to the CNMI Arts Council gallery, members showed their encouragement to the students. The arts council also promised to help in Ganapin's future classes.

Ganapin said the event was successful for the students, parents and the community. "It was a productive and meaningful Christmas break for everyone."

"These kids have great po-

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

After Bhutto

It has taken less than a week for the tragedy of Benazir Bhutto's assassination to segue into the farce of a potentially disastrous dynastic succession. The slain former prime minister, a woman of enormous strengths and flaws, certainly had the legitimacy to be Pakistan's preeminent opposition leader. Her successors, a notoriously corrupt husband and a sheltered 19-year-old son, do not. Neither is qualified to lead a nuclear-armed nation of 165 million citizens, many of them understandably angry and demoralized.

There are now suggestions that Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party may split. This would not be a bad thing. The pro-democracy wing of the party must reject the regency of Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, best known in Pakistan as "Mr. 10 (Percent)" for his alleged take from every government contract signed during his wife's premiership. It cannot make common cause with the pro-dynastic wing of the party, for whom worship of the Bhutto pseudo-monarchy trumps the democratic and progressive values that Benazir Bhutto tried to personify.

If the PPP lacks for charismatic leaders, it is because Bhutto herself allowed no rivals to rise. The party must now set about identifying and promoting a new generation of political talent. There is room for hope in that regard. The recent revolt of the Pakistani lawyers against the imposition of emergency rule spotlighted the courage of thousands of pro-democracy activists willing to go to jail for their belief in the rule of law.

However belatedly, the Bush administration should also seize this moment to get on the right side of history in Pakistan. Its ignominious plan to keep Pervez Musharraf in the presidency while ushering in the popular Bhutto to serve as prime minister is now in ruins. Whether or not Musharraf's government was culpable or negligent in Bhutto's death, its handling of the assassination has created grave doubts about its intentions. The government's ham-handed attempts to silence the doctors who treated Bhutto, its highly dubious claim that she was not shot but died because she hit her head on the sunroof of her SUV, the emergence of a video apparently showing a man firing a pistol at Bhutto, and the scandalous decision by a police chief to refuse the hospital's request for an autopsy do not lend themselves to benign interpretation.

There is no question of the Pakistani government investigating itself. The Bush administration should immediately endorse calls for an international inquiry into Bhutto's assassination, just as it backed the establishment of a special United Nations tribunal to investigate the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Failure to do so would send the message that Americans only support justice in cases in which the suspected perpetrators are not U.S. allies—Syria in the case of the Hariri killing.

The United States has little political leverage to show for its billions of dollars in military aid to Musharraf—much of which has allegedly been diverted from the struggle against Islamist jihadists to the struggle against India. But it can and should refuse to recognize sham elections that would give Musharraf a fake mandate. Washington should insist as a condition of future aid that Musharraf allow genuinely free and fair elections. These will by no means ensure Pakistan's political stability, but the alternative is incalculably worse.

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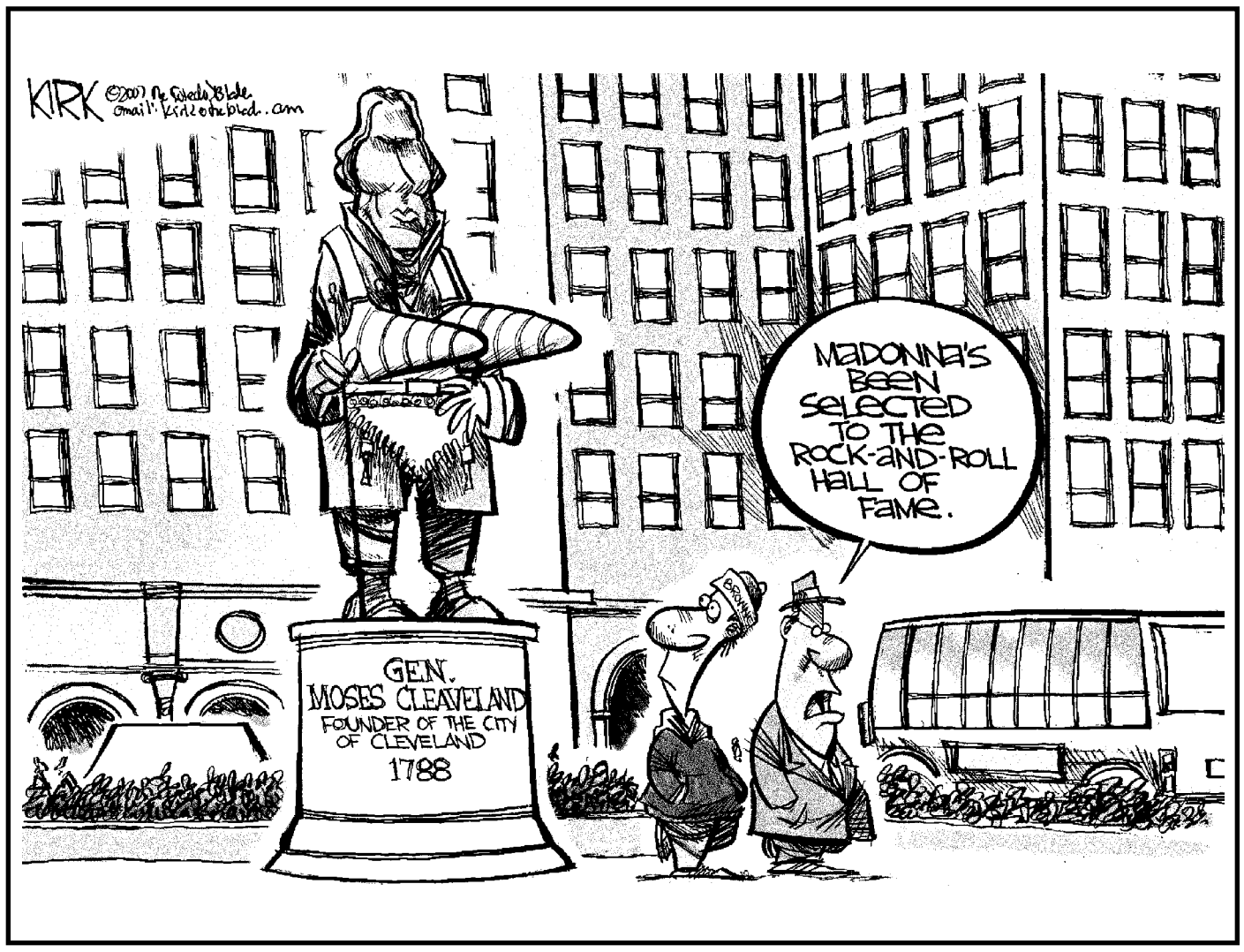


Bush's best-laid plans

By ANDREW J. BACEVICH
SPECIAL TO THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Viewed from a historian's perspective, the Bush administration since 9/11 has ransacked the past to conjure up comforting expectations for the future. President Bush excels in this exercise, expressing confidence that the "untamed fire of freedom" will one day soon "reach the darkest corners of our world." Yet as the assassination of Benazir Bhutto reminds us yet again, events refuse to play along. History remains stubbornly recalcitrant.

Bush would have us believe otherwise. History, he insists, "has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty." That direction, the president believes, tends toward peace, democracy and freedom for all humankind. America's purpose, assigned by the Author of Liberty, is to nudge history toward its intended destination. More immediately, America's ostensible aim since 9/11 has been to make the blessings of liberty available to the Islamic world. As democracy spreads there, the threat posed by terrorism will diminish. Such at least has been the assumption underlying Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the two wars begun on Bush's watch.

This strategy of militarized liberation has been fraught with contradictions, not the least of which has been the partnership forged between the United States and Pakistan. Bush has repeatedly declared Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf a valued and trusted ally. Since 9/11, the U.S. has provided Pakistan with at least $10 billion in aid, most of it going to the army. In hopes of ensuring Pakistani cooperation in the global war on terrorism, Washington has ignored that nation's record as perhaps the world's most egregious nuclear weapons proliferator.

Yet Musharraf has never shared Bush's professed commitment to democracy and freedom. A career soldier, Musharraf seized power in 1999 through a military coup. He is an authoritarian dictator who represents the interests of the Pakistani officer corps, distinguished less by any liberal inclinations than by its pronounced Islamist sympathies and a paranoid obsession with India. On Nov. 3, Musharraf declared a state of emergency, a pretext for jailing critics and getting rid of a troublesome Supreme Court. He ended the emergency on Dec. 15. Although Musharraf offers up occasional testimonials on behalf of democracy, they deserve to be taken about as seriously as Bush's calls for bipartisanship in Washington. It's cheap window dressing.

Still, as long as Musharraf appeared to be a stabilizing force and supportive of U.S. efforts to create a new Afghanistan, the Bush administration turned a blind eye to his anti-democratic tendencies. Not for the first time in U.S. history, ideals took a back seat to more pragmatic calculations. Washington talked democracy but opted in practice to support a strongman who promised order and cooperation against the Taliban and al-Qaida, despite the fact that Pakistani assistance against the Islamic radicals operating within Pakistan was never more than spotty.

During the last year, however, the strongman began to appear less strong. Only as Musharraf's power waned did the United States actively press Pakistan to get onboard the democratic bandwagon. First, the Bush administration promoted a bizarre power-sharing agreement between Musharraf and Bhutto. When that shotgun marriage failed, it insisted on elections as the way to shore up the government's legitimacy. Now an assassin has demolished these carefully laid plans, possibly thrusting Pakistan into unprecedented turmoil while leaving Bush tied to a partner who increasingly invites comparisons to the shah of Iran.

Faced with the prospect of "losing" Pakistan, what should the world's sole superpower do? Despite Musharraf's flaws, should Washington back him to the hilt as the only alternative to chaos? Or should Bush commit the United States without reservation to building a strong democracy in Pakistan?

To pose such questions is to presume that decisions made in Washington will decisively influence the course of events in Islamabad. Yet the lesson to be drawn from the developments of the last several days—and from U.S. involvement in Pakistan over the course of decades—suggests just the opposite: The United States has next to no ability to determine Pakistan's fate.

How the crisis touched off by Bhutto's assassination will end is impossible to predict, although the outcome is likely to be ugly. Yet this much we can say with confidence: That outcome won't be decided in the White House. Once again, as Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "events are in the saddle, and ride mankind," with those events reducing the most powerful man in the world to the status of spectator.

At the beginning of his second term, Bush spoke confidently of the United States sponsoring a global democratic revolution "with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Ever since that hopeful moment, developments across the greater Middle East—above all, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and on the West Bank—have exposed the very real limits of U.S. wisdom and power.

Now the virtual impotence of the U.S. in the face of the crisis enveloping Pakistan—along with its complicity in creating that crisis—ought to discredit once and for all any notions of America fixing the world's ills.

Bush dreamed of managing history. It turns out that he cannot even manage Pakistan. Thus does the Author of Liberty mock the pretensions of those who presume to understand his intentions and to interpret his will.

Andrew J. Bacevich is a professor of history and international relations at Boston University.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

E-mail purgatory

By ED STEPHENS
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Ed's column runs every Friday. Visit Ed at SaipanBlog.com.

The Commonwealth's dependence on the Web and e-mail is simply a fact of life for a remote locale that manages to enjoy a very modern lifestyle. When electronic communications hiccup it's reason to get justifiably panicked, and yet nobody with any sense would want to roll back the clock to the dark days before Al Gore invented the Internet. But e-mail in particular can be a pain in the neck sometimes, and one of my New Year's tasks has been to mercilessly raze most of my e-mail accounts and start over with a clean slate.

The old bugaboo, spam, is an old rock in the shoe that we've all learned to live with. But what I'm less graceful about accepting is that some folks insist on using e-mail as a toy. What possesses some people to send out mass e-mail broadcasts, usually carrying a vapid payload of asinine political rants or even more asinine jokes, that trumpet the e-mail addresses of all the recipients in the "to" line?

This stuff inevitably finds its way to spam lists, causing more e-mail pollution for everyone. Unfortunately, this behavior seems to be an increasing trend on Saipan. It's worse than rude, it's positively destructive.

As I make the holiday rounds of old haunts and friends and families, I've gotten a few calls from acquaintances who have finally managed to catch up to me; they offer holiday cheer, but then ask pointedly why I haven't answered their e-mails. The answer, frequently, is that I canceled the accounts.

You can probably see how this line of conversation goes from there. Question: Why didn't I send out an e-mail that provided folks with the new email address? Answer: Because the "e-mail is a toy" crowd will just use the new addresses in their next broadcasts, thus defiling the new addresses just as they defiled the old.

Next question: Then might this scorched earth policy mean that I'll miss some "important" e-mail? Answer: Well, nothing's perfect.

On a related note, I'll mention that I've seen some heated arguments on Saipan over e-mails that were supposedly sent (says one guy), but allegedly never received (claims the other guy). Well, e-mail does that sometimes, it just vanishes into the ether. Or it gets eaten by spam filters, blocked by blacklists, or goodness only knows what else.

In the Commonwealth, e-mail isn't just the most convenient form of communications, it's sometimes the only practical form. Time zone differences zap the telephone gig in many cases, and you can't easily, and certainly not cheaply, get documents sent to the big cities in the outside world overnight. And don't get me started on fax machines, which were bastard technology the day they were invented, and have only succeeded getting being more annoying and worthless as the years have gone by.

But as necessary as e-mail is nowadays, I also wonder if its best days are behind it. It seems a besieged medium. I've seen estimates that claim that fully 90 percent of the world's e-mail traffic is spam. The great thing about e-mail—that it's free—may be counterbalanced by its fatal flaw, namely, that it's free. Which is to say that being free is creating big costs. Now there's an economic paradox for you.

And here's a specter that is downright spooky: Cell phone text message spam. This is just starting to creep out of the Pandora's box. Like e-mail, text messages to phones can be sent for free via the Web. But, unlike e-mail, of course, many folks pay for every text message they receive. This is going to get ugly, so it just accentuates the point that promiscuously handing out your contact information is like painting it on the side of the Nauru building in neon colors.

Here's what I think: Maybe the great electronic communications free-for-all may be coming to an end. Perhaps communications itself is becoming a potential point of critical failure for people and companies. That's a heck of an endpoint for the "revolution" that seemed to serve us so well.

Social issues, moral choices, and People's Theatre

BETTER LIVING

By DAVID KHORRAM, M.D.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

David Khorram, MD is a board certified ophthalmologist and director of Marianas Eye Institute. Comments and questions are welcome. Call 235-9090 or email him through www.MarianasEye.com, or leave comments at www.MarianasEye.blogspot.com. Copyright © 2008 David Khorram

Last week I had the opportunity to attend a conference in Guam that examined a variety of social issues from a spiritual perspective. One of the speakers was Shamil Fattakhov, a Russian filmmaker and journalist with background in conflict resolution, who has founded an NGO that helps communities examine their difficult social issues through an interesting format using theatre.

In the 1990s he began to grapple with a variety of social issues on his TV talk show through the use of skits. A topic would be selected, usually one that no one talks about, or that is usually addressed very superficially. However, the skit would not have an ending. It would be taken to the moment of highest conflict, and then stopped. At that point, members of the studio audience would be asked to first evaluate what had just happened, and then to suggest solutions to the conflicts. Audience members would then be invited to participate in completing the drama. "So, you think the father should do this in this situation. Come on up here, and play the part of the father for us," and the drama would continue, using the collective wisdom of the audience.

The format, which has been adopted in many places in the world, is sometimes referred to as "People's Theatre." The skits tend to pick hot, complex topics that people generally don't talk about... things like a Albanian daughter coming home to tell her parents she's fallen in love and wants to get married...to a Macedonian (this was performed just after the war in Macedonia). What topics might be addressed in our community?

The goals of the theatre are six-fold:

- To establish the highest moral principle governing the topic.
- To clarify the essence of the problem or issue.
- To establish the necessity and possibility of its resolution.
- To seek to find practical positive ways of resolving the problem by means of consultation.
- To share experiences, enrich each other's knowledge and understanding on moral issues, and to use the accumulated wisdom of humanity to do so.
- To inspire the audience and to encourage the participation to act in a positive, moral way, to develop their own moral capacities.

I found the whole discussion fascinating. Mr. Fattakhov pointed out that so often, particularly in dilemma facing youth, people take action based on the feeling that "I had no choice" and that the process of the theatre and the discussion helps people see that every situation presents choices.

Part of his work around the world involves training communities to develop their own "People's Theatre". The five-day training includes instruction on the philosophy of the method, choosing topics, developing skits, learning to act and direct, and to serve as a moderator or "host" to capture the feedback of the audience. I've received some feedback from members of our community that they would be interested in receiving this training and bringing this sort of "People's Theatre" to Saipan. If you are interested, send me an e-mail, or give me a call. We're exploring the possibility of bringing Mr. Fattakhov to Saipan to provide the five-day training course.

In the meantime, feel free to send me your suggestions on topics that you would like to see explored.

Letter to the Editor

An open selection process for Teacher Rep

After four years of not supporting the Teacher Rep, ACT is back on the warpath to capture the BOE Teacher Rep post with more controversy and dramatics. For the record, I did try to work with ACT to have their president as the BOE Teacher Rep. Furthermore, I humbled myself and became a member of ACT in the best interest of all teachers and I am not against Ms. Miller being the BOE Teacher Rep but she must decide if she wants to be a teacher or administrator to comply with the CNMI Constitution. There must also be a free and open election, which is also basic Labor law for representing employees. Dr. Borja can attest to the fact that I turned down an offer to be a vice principal at Hopwood when he was principal so I could stay on the board as the Teacher Rep. Ms. Miller is no different and she created this controversy which is looking more and more like a resume-building and a quest for power than an effort to help teachers. If she truly wants to be the BOE Teacher Rep, then step down as an administrator—it's very simple. The decision has always been Ms. Miller's choice to make—not teachers—yet she is pushing her unwillingness to decide on teachers. If teachers truly want her as the BOE Teacher Rep then make what is an easy decision, apply the true test for commitment and ask her to step down as an administrator.

When speaking of ACT, we must also be realistic in that less than a dozen teachers are truly active members in the decision process—meaning the teachers that keep pushing for Ms. Miller to remain an administrator and BOE Teacher Rep does not represent the consensus of all teachers. When I attended one of these so-called important meetings, there were only nine teachers including myself. I also begged Ms. Miller and the teachers present to comply with the Constitution but the so-called respect that is being claimed by Ms. Miller was not shown to me. In fact, I was given the floor to make a statement and I was cut off before I could finish. I finally had to beg to be recognized again just to respond and it took the plea of another teacher to

See AN OPEN on Page 14

A few love-my-country resolutions

By JAMES P. PINKERTON
Special to Newsday

Pinkerton is a columnist for Newsday*. Pinkerton's e-mail address is jim@jamesppinkerton.com.*

My New Year's resolutions:

I resolve to worry more about Pakistan's 75-weapon nuclear stockpile than about global warming. I am more worried about being incinerated by a loose nuke than I am about the water table rising a few feet.

Yet, I also resolve to worry more about global warming than about democracy in Pakistan. Democracy is wonderful, but only for people who want it and who are willing to play by its rules. Democracy without self-discipline is a formula for, well, Pakistan.

I further resolve to focus more on who gets into America from scary countries—such as Pakistan. And I wish the federal government would do so, too, although I am not confident. For example, four months after 9/11, in January 2002, a Pakistani by the name of Shabbir Ahmed, holding a long record of pro-terrorist/anti-American statements, was given a "religious worker" visa and allowed to come to the United States and lead a mosque in Lodi, Calif.

Was that such a good idea? Apparently not. In 2005, Ahmed, suspected of keeping up his terrorist ties, was arrested and finally deported.

So maybe the Department of Homeland Security can have its own resolution: to err on the side of caution on behalf of protecting Americans, not on the side of free expression for jihadis.

I have more resolutions, specifically for this election year:

I resolve to support candidates in 2008 who take seriously what the preamble of the Constitution sets forth: "insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense." Speaking of which, I resolve to vote for people who understand that it's idiotic to send hundreds of billions of dollars a year in oil money to countries that alternate between disliking us and wanting to kill us. It's hard to find any nonlobbyist American who thinks that our current energy "policy" is a good idea, but it's hard to find a politician who speaks credibly of an alternative.

In addition, I resolve to support candidates who understand that there are two kinds of competitiveness: economic and military. And if I had to choose one, I'd choose the latter—military. I can deal with a recession, and so can you. But none of us can afford to lose a war.

If we need to spend more money on defense, so be it. But more to the point, we need to mobilize our technological and industrial base—and concentrate on keeping both here at home. Do you think it matters that Honda has built a robot that can play the violin? Do you think there's a military application to such niftyness? I do, and so do the Japanese. Imagine if we had 'bots on the ground in Iraq, as opposed to boots on the ground.

Finally, I resolve to love my country all the more, and to remember that freedom isn't free, that liberty isn't license, that democracy means keeping the fools out of power.

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲82° ▼75°	▲82° ▼76°	▲82° ▼75°	▲82° ▼75°	▲81° ▼75

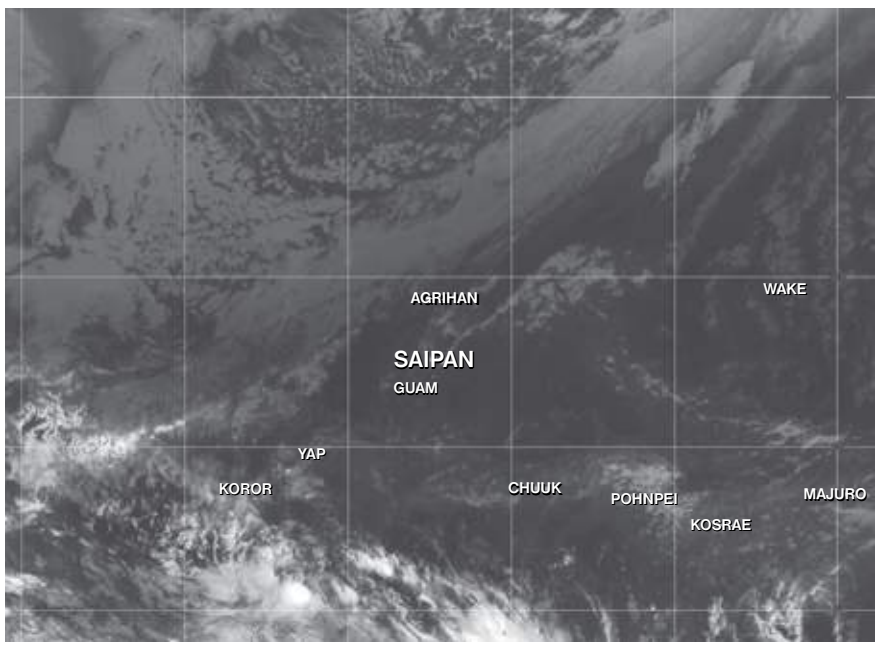
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Rain	▲84	▼76
Palau	Mostly Sunny	▲88	▼78
Yap	Partly Sunny	▲87	▼77
Chuuk	Cloudy	▲90	▼79
Pohnpei	Cloudy	▲87	▼76
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲88	▼78
Majuro	Thunderstorms	▲83	▼75

Around The Globe

Auckland	Partly Sunny	▲73	▼59
Beijing	Sunny	▲39	▼24
Hong Kong	Sunny	▲69	▼61
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	▲78	▼70
London	Partly Sunny	▲43	▼41
Los Angeles	Rain	▲59	▼54
Manila	Partly Sunny	▲86	▼72
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	▲91	▼75
Miami	Cloudy	▲69	▼61
New York	Mostly Sunny	▲38	▼30
Osaka	Partly Sunny	▲47	▼34
Paris	Rain	▲43	▼41
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲47	▼26
Rome	Rain	▲55	▼45
Salem	Rain	▲46	▼38
San Francisco	Rain	▲55	▼51
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲36	▼21
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲55	▼38
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	▲41	▼31

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00AM, THURSDAY, JAN. 3, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward near Minami Tori Shima at 25N155E to 21N150E, then continues as a shear line through Agrihan at 18N146E to 11N130E and beyond. Widespread cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 500 miles northwest of this boundary. A near-equatorial trough stretches eastward from 4N130E to EQ151E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are occurring south of Koror or south of a line from 8N130E to EQ146E. An upper-level trough starts northeastward from EQ137E through Chuuk and Pohnpei to an upper-level low centered near 19N170E. Together with trade-wind convergence along 5N. Scattered showers are forming across Pohnpei, Kosrae, Kwajalein and Majuro. This large area is between 4N and 9N from 157e to 180.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
06:27AM Today	High Tide:	1.5 Feet
10:40AM Today	Low Tide:	1.3 Feet
03:45PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
11:40PM Today	Low Tide:	0.1 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:44AM	5:59PM
Saturday	6:44AM	6:00PM
Sunday	6:45AM	6:00PM
Monday	6:45AM	6:01PM
Tuesday	6:45AM	6:02PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	02:54AM	02:22PM
Saturday	03:47AM	03:07PM
Sunday	04:40AM	03:57PM
Monday	05:33AM	04:51PM
Tuesday	06:25AM	05:46PM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contribution are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 25, 2007

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Guam

CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	1,2,4,5,6,7
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Saipan-Seoul

OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7

Saipan-Busan

OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7

Guam-Manila

CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7

Saipan-Manila

CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3

Saipan-Nagoya

NW 078	8:30am	11:10am	Daily

Guam-Nagoya

CO 971	7:45am	10:30am	1,2,4,5,6,7
NW 023	4:15pm	7:05pm	Daily
CO 904	4:35pm	7:25pm	Daily

Saipan-Narita

NW 078	8:30am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily

Guam-Narita

JO 982	4:15am	7:00am	Daily
CO 961	7:20am	9:55am	Daily
CO 006	1:00pm	3:45pm	Daily
JO 942	3:30pm	6:15pm	Daily
NW 081	3:55pm	6:50pm	Daily
NW 073	4:15pm	7:00pm	Daily
CO 963	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily

Saipan-Osaka

NW 083	4:30pm	7:15pm	1,2,3,5,6,7

Guam-Hongkong

CO 910	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5

Saipan-Guanzhou

CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6

Saipan-Rota

CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7

Rota-Guam

CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

ARRIVALS

Guam-Saipan

CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,4,5,6,7
CO 9316	3:30am	4:20am	2
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Seoul-Saipan

OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	10:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
OZ 607	6:50pm	2:50am+1	3,7 via Busan
OZ 607	7:30pm	2:50am+1	4 via Busan

Busan-Saipan

OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7

Manila-Guam

CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7

Manila-Saipan

CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3

Nagoya-Saipan

NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily

Nagoya-Guam

NW 024	10:00am	2:40pm	Daily
CO 970	11:30am	4:00pm	Daily
CO 905	8:25pm	12:50am+1	1,3,4,5,6,7

Narita-Saipan

NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya

Narita-Guam

JO 941	9:30am	2:05pm	Daily
NW 074	9:45am	2:25pm	Daily
CO 962	11:05am	3:35pm	Daily
CO 007	5:15pm	9:50pm	Daily
NW 082	8:30pm	1:15am+1	Daily
CO 964	8:40pm	1:15am+1	Daily
JO 981	9:30pm	2:05am+1	Daily

Osaka-Saipan

NW 084	10:40am	3:20pm	1,2,3,5,6,7

Hongkong-Guam

CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5

Guanzhou-Saipan

CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5

Rota-Saipan

CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6

Guam-Rota

CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

(Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana. ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

JOETEN'S

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Give your Budget a Break!

Sale starts on Jan. 4 to 9, 2008

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10 Cup Rice Cooker
$22.99

Proctor-Silex
8 Speed Blender
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$25.49

Proctor-Silex
5-Speed Handmixer
$12.99

Presto Power
Popcorn Maker
$19.99

Mens Nautica Tee Shirts Printed Logo
$19.99

Mens Rancher S/S Poly Shirt
$14.99

Ladies Kahibo Missy S/S Blouse
$9.99

Ladies Calgary Jeans Original Rise
$12.99

Boys S/S Polo Shirt
$7.99

Boys Gym Shorts
$8.99

Girls Round Neck Top
$3.99

Girls Jade Pants
$19.99

Barney Washcloth 8 pack
$2.99/ea.

Dove Bar Soap 100grm/2pak $1.79

Nice & Easy Hair Color $7.99 /ea.

Suave Body Lotion 18oz. $2.99 /ea.

Suave Inv. Deodorant 1.6oz. $1.89 /ea.

St. Ives Apricot Scrub $5.49 /ea.

Pyrex Prepware 3pc. Set $14.99

Assorted Throw Rugs $4.49

Berber Shade Rug 2x3 $9.49

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Look for these and more great savings throughout our store!

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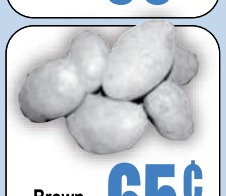
Cello Carrots 75¢/bg.

Sleeved Celery 69¢/lb.



Brown Potatoes 65¢/lb.

Yellow Onions 59¢/lb.

Napa Cabbage 69¢/lb.

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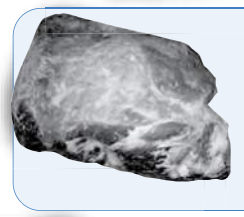
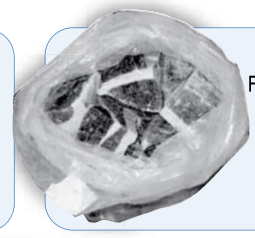


New Zealand Boneless Beef Clod
$1.99/lb.



New Zealand Beef For Stew Family Bag 7lb.
$14.99/ea.

Chicken Leg Quarters 22lb.
$16.99/cs.

New Zealand 1/2 Shell Mussels 2.2lb.
$5.99/ea.

Asahi Sugar 4.4 lb
$1.79/ea.

Hafa Adai Water 24/350ml
$6.50/cs..

Kristov Vodka Cruisers 275ml.
$1.49/ea.

Soft N Gentle Bathroom Tissue 24 Roll
$9.99/ea.

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$17.99/bg.

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2005 EPICA 4DR.
Auto, Beige
Stock: U07-075R
Mileage: 10098
License #: ACA-204
$8,999

USED CARS

STOCK	YEAR	MODEL	TRANS.	MILEAGE	COLOR	LICENSE #	PRICE
TOYOTA SEDANS							
CONSIGNMENT	2006	CAMRY XLE 4DR	AUTO	28890	L. BLUE	ABX-669	18,999
U07-098T	2004	CAMRY 4DR	AUTO		SILVER	ACE-355	13,799
R07-025F	2004	CAMRY LE 4DR	AUTO	43820	BEIGE	ACC-860	13,999
R07-016F	2005	MATRIX	AUTO	19890	GRAY	ABV-759	11,299
R07-022B	2005	MATRIX	AUTO	27658	SILVER	ACG-443	12,099
GM CARS							
U07-123P	2006	AVEO 4DR.	AUTO	9500	GRAY	ACE-688	8,999
R07-031F	2005	AVEO 4DR.	AUTO	68515	YELLOW	ABY-169	8,999
R07-035F	2005	AVEO 4DR.	AUTO	63367	WHITE	ACD-026	8,699
R07-013F	2005	AVEO HATCHBACK	AUTO	39164	ORANGE	ADO-022	7,899
R07-023F	2005	AVEO HATCHBACK	AUTO	32635	WHITE	ABX-679	9,599
TOYOTA TRUCKS							
R07-036B	2003	TACOMA 4X4 D/CAB	AUTO		RED	ABR-739	15,999
R07-038F	2004	TACOMA 4X4 XTRACAB	AUTO	49609	BEIGE	ABV-159	11,899
R07-026F	2004	TACOMA 4X2 REG/CAB	MANUAL	46550	WHITE	ACA-308	9,999
U07-021F	2004	TACOMA 4X2 REG/CAB	MANUAL	15382	BEIGE	ACA-820	10,999
OTHER CARS & TRUCKS							
U07-106P	2004	HONDA CIVIC DX DR.	AUTO	50416	SILVER	ADF-401	8,999
U07-107P	2004	HONDA CIVIC DX DR.	AUTO	48755	SILVER	ADF-421	8,999
U07-108P	2004	HONDA CIVIC DX DR.	AUTO	45099	SILVER	ADF-431	8,999
U07-109P	2004	HONDA CIVIC DX DR.	AUTO	43869	SILVER	ADF-371	8,999
U07-034T	2000	NISSAN MAXIMA GXE 4DR.	AUTO	68648	WHITE	ACT-812	8,399
U07-104T	2003	NISSAN MURANO SE	AUTO	32000	PEWT	ABZ-615	16,799
U07-095T	1999	MAZDA MILLENIA 4DR. SEDAN	AUTO	91014	SILVER	ABP-583	7,999
U07-118T	2004	MAZDA MX3 4DR. SEDAN	AUTO	33366	SILVER	ADH-312	12,799
CONSIGNMENT	2001	FORD ESCAPE	AUTO	39530	BLUE	ABW-458	10,899
VANS							
U07-096	2000	SIENNA XLE	AUTO	92766	GRAY	ACO-561	8,999
SPORT UTILITY							
U07-064T	2001	4RUNNER 4WD	AUTO	56882	CHAMPAIGNE	ABY-153	13,599
U07-050T	2002	RAV4 4DR. 4WD	AUTO	39182	WHITE	ABW-677	12,799
U07-007T	2004	RAV4 4DR. 4WD	AUTO	41649	BEIGE	ACB-455	14,999
U07-082P	2004	RAV4 4DR. 2WD	AUTO	68919	GRAY		13,599

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2x6x12		$11.60/Pc
2x6x14	$8.50/Pc	
2x6x16		$14.50/Pc
2x6x20	$11.90/Pc	

UTILITY LUMBERS

	Regular	Treated
2x4x12	$4.20/Pc	$6.20/Pc
2x4x14	$5.00/Pc	$7.00/Pc
2x4x16	$6.00/Pc	$8.20/Pc
2x4x18	$6.30/Pc	$9.60/Pc
2x4x20	$7.20/Pc	$10.50/Pc

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Ceiling tile 2'*4' $3.00/pc
Rope $2/pc
US lumber 15% off
Roof tin 15% off
Shower room 35% off
Window 35% off
Cement board $4/pc
Downspout $8/pc
Squre bar $4/pc
Formica $5/pc
Ceramic tile $0.3/pc

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AN OPEN

From Page 11

let me speak before Ms. Miller finally yielded the floor to me. I don't have to say anymore because we all see the results. Ms. Miller knew her appointment would be a controversial issue because I told her and she still pursued it. Ms. Miller was also the first person that brought this matter to the attention of the media and the public—not me. I tried on Education Day, in e-mails, and by attending an ACT meeting to resolve this to keep it from being ugly but we can all see the results when an organization doesn't respect its elected Representative or the Constitution—the ACT drama show.

I also want to clarify my appeal to the Board because it was not intended to get the Board involved in the process but to get the Board to force the Governor to get involved. I only wanted the Board to tell the Governor to appoint me in an acting capacity so the Board will be complete until a permanent Rep can be identified. Maybe I should have worded it that way. I totally agree with Mrs. Blanco because it was clearly established when I was elected that the Board has nothing to do with the selection process. But making a recommendation for a temporary solution is not being involved in the actual selection and appointment process for the permanent member. I felt that some form of recommendation was better than none and my temporary appointment was the right thing to do and the right response for the Board, especially when the Governor is asking the Board to make some kind of recommendation or teachers won't have any representation and the Board will not be in compliance with the Constitution.

As the Representative of all teachers, I also spoke up because no teacher in their right mind wants to be subjected to the ugly tactics of ACT, especially when you look at what is going on now and what they have tried to do to me in the past. I'm sure teachers and the public are aware of the group's nature and can remember. ACT can make bylaws and make assertions all they want but it doesn't change the law and this has nothing to do with Ambrose—it's the law and the Governor that ACT needs to deal with. Ms. Miller would never get away with this on the mainland as an administrator and anyone that knows anything about labor relations will tell you I'm right. Teachers need to ask why doesn't she comply and do what is right and best for teachers and ask the Governor to have an election.

As for the election, when you consider that the election for Ms. Miller as president was handled by "her" teacher(s) at San Vicente and the fact it took entirely too long for the results, it is easy to understand why no teacher wants to run against Ms. Miller under these conditions. Furthermore, the so-called 290 teachers that allegedly voted for Ms. Miller voted for her as the ACT president—not the BOE Teacher Rep. The second part of the equation is there has been no open election for the BOE Teacher Rep position by an independent source. NO teacher in their right mind wants to be involved in an ACT election for BOE Teacher Rep, which is why no teacher came forward. Teachers and the Board now have the expectation that the Governor will choose, not ACT. Teacher want the security of knowing like I did that can speak freely for all teachers and the Governor is going to support them, especially against frivolous attacks by ACT and even the Board. Governor Babauta established a standard and method for a free an open election but the present Governor chose to deviate, which is why we (teachers and the Governor) are right back where we started four years ago, pointing fingers over the selection process. I did all that work to give teachers a real voice on the Board that couldn't be silenced or removed at the whim of the Board and to convince the Governor of the need to have a standard legitimized election process to fulfill a 1985 Constitutional Amendment, only to see everything being erased for no reason by the present Governor, with the help of ACT. But I pray this mess will make the Governor reconsider because it's starting to smell and it's not going to dissipate but escalate until he takes control of what is clearly his fiduciary responsibility to carry out the laws.

Since ACT has never done the work to qualify as the exclusive bargaining representative of teachers within the PSS as stated in the Constitution, the right thing to do given the circumstances was for me to remain at my post until teachers and the Governor can satisfy the CNMI Constitution and mind you I really don't want the job again as long as there is an ACT. ACT should have been focusing on the Governor and the law and not attacking the Teacher Rep because the Governor appoints—not the newspapers and not me. ACT is making it seem like I'm the only thing in the way when it is really ACT that can't meet the standard and teachers have not been given the opportunity for an independent selection process under the aegis of the Governor's office. It should be clear by now to all teachers and everybody that I'm not the enemy or the problem. I ran for the post to help all teachers and maybe one day ACT will get it and listen to my advice because they are only creating their usual drama, with no solutions for teachers. I pray there won't be a need for me to say anything else on this matter. May the misguided ideology of ACT rest in peace.

Ambrose M. Bennett
BOE Teacher Rep

BY THE NUMBERS

US population seen at 303.1M on Jan. 1

As our nation rang in the new year, the U.S. Census Bureau projected the Jan. 1, 2008, population to be at 303,146,284—up 2,842,103 or 0.9 percent from New Year's Day 2007.

In January, the United States is expected to register one birth every eight seconds and one death every 11 seconds.

Meanwhile, net international migration is expected to add one person every 30 seconds. The result is an increase in the total U.S. population of one person every 13 seconds.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Parking restrictions at Saipan int'l airport

The Saipan International Airport remains on "high alert" and as such parking at the airport's curbside is limited to off-loading and loading only. Any vehicle violating this rule will be tire-locked or towed away.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority issued the reminder yesterday, emphasizing that the only vehicles authorized to park at the terminals are emergency response vehicles such as Police, Fire and ambulance cars.

"CPA wants to remind the general public of the continued 'High Alert' imposed by the Transportation Security Administration under the Homeland Security Advisory System. Under this Advisory System, TSA is recommending several restrictions and asking each airport to comply for the safety and security of the traveling public.

"One of the recommendations is to enforce parking restrictions at the curbside of the airport terminals. The public should be aware that parking is limited to off-loading and loading only as outlined in the Commonwealth Port Authority Rules and Regulations, Pat 2.7. All other vehicles will be directed to park at the main public parking lot.

"The Ports Authority Police will enforce these restrictions per CPA AR&R Part 2.7 and will tire lock and/or tow any vehicle not in compliance with the imposed requirement. Tire-locked or towed vehicles will only be released to the driver/owner upon payment of imposed fines of such violation," said acting CPA executive director Stanley C. Torres. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Marianas Dive sets goals for 2008

By ANGELO VILLAGOMEZ
CORRESPONDENT

Marianas Dive held their first meeting of 2008 on Wednesday night. The meeting was informal and the members used the time to come up with a list of goals for 2008.

Their main priority this year will be to identify new dive sites in the Marianas.

One member said, "I'd love to see Tinian ringed with 36 buoys. If there were that many dive sites over there, I'd spend a couple weekends a year on Tinian diving."

Marianas Dive president Mike Tripp told the group "We need to raise awareness for diving, especially Tinian."

Tripp thinks that if there were more dive sites on Tinian, tourists would have more reason to find time for Tinian in their vacation itinerary. He explained, "Tinian could capture those tourists that want to stay in the Marianas a bit longer and those dives could be something new to do for people who have been to the Marianas before."

The creation of new dive sites on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota will require the use of an underwater drill to create new moorings. An unnamed CRM official told the group that a drill for making new mooring sites will arrive sometime in March. In the meantime, Marianas Dive members plan to go on several exploratory dives.

One of the dive sites on Saipan that would benefit from a buoy is the underwater wreck known as "Emily." Emily is a Japanese-made Kawanishi H8K airplane. Dive operators currently have to drop anchor at the site, which can cause damage to benthic habitat.

Tripp feels that the most important thing to perpetuating the local dive industry is to teach local kids to dive. If local kids are going to pursue careers in diving, the first thing they need to do is learn to dive. Then they can get jobs working in dive shops and hopefully one day open up their own small businesses.

They hope to teach 50 local youths to dive this year. Out of those 50, they hope several will go on to get their advanced diver and rescue diver certifications.

The group also wants to get defibrillators, oxygen tanks, and first aid kids at all the major dive sites. They are currently working with Northern Mariana Islands Red Cross and G4S Security Services to obtain the equipment and train the security guards at the Grotto, Obyan Beach, and Laulau Bay.

Other projects the group wants to work on are to attract more Guam divers to the Marianas, continue to improve the Marianas Dive website, and to fix the lips of the steps leading down to the Grotto.

Marianas Dive members think that the perception on Guam is that the cost of diving the Marianas versus diving Guam is expensive, that there are no cheap flights from Guam, and that it can be difficult and expensive to plan a vacation to Saipan.

Many Guam divers do not know about diving in the Marianas, so part of the group's mission will be to tell people about the wonders of Saipan diving.

Tripp hopes that the Marianas Visitors Authority and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce will help promote diving. With the number of divers currently involved, he sees 2008 as an opportunity for MVA to get major public support for destination enhancement in diving.

Marianas Dive meets on the first and third Wednesday of every month at Porky's in Garapan at 6:30pm. They also host an underwater cleanup of the third Sunday of every month. Visit www.marianasdive.com for more information.

Angelo Villagomez is the Executive Director of MINA

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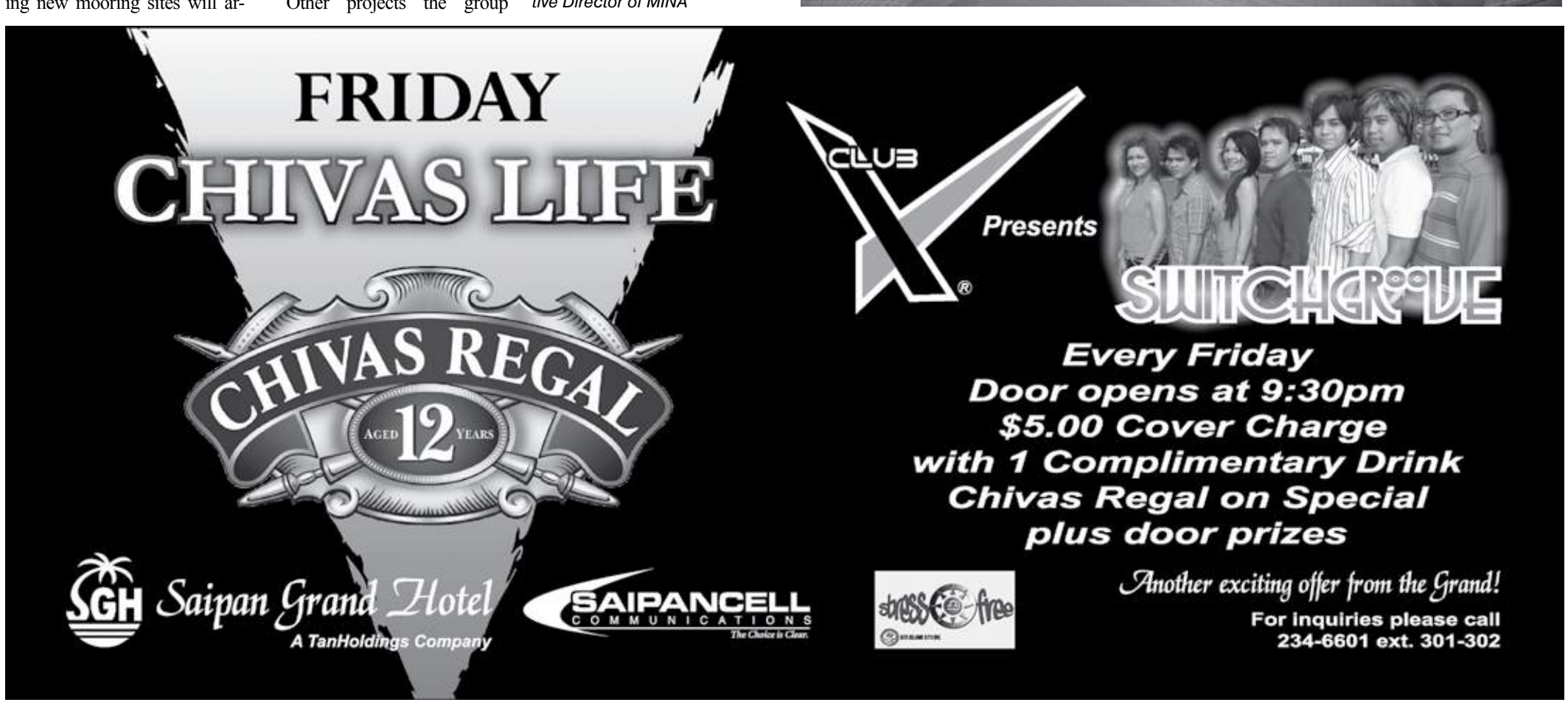

Diaz

Tinian student joins list of elite scholars

The National Society of High School Scholars announced last week that Tinian Jr. Sr. High School student Mikaela H. Diaz from Tinian has been selected for membership.

The announcement was made by NSHSS founder and chair Claes Nobel, a senior member of the family that established the Nobel Prize. The Society recognizes top scholars and invites only those students who have achieved superior academic excellence.

"On behalf of NSHSS, I am honored to recognize the hard work, sacrifice, and commitment that Mikaela has demonstrated to achieve this exceptional level of academic excellence," said Nobel. "Mikaela is now a member of a unique community of scholars—a community that represents our very best hope for the future."

"Our vision is to build a dynamic international organization that connects members with meaningful content, resources, and opportunities," stated NSHSS President James Lewis. "We aim to help students like Mikaela build on their academic successes and enhance the skills and desires to have a positive impact on the global community."

Membership in NSHSS entitles qualified students to enjoy a wide variety of benefits, including scholarship opportunities, academic competitions, free events, member-only resources, publications, participation in programs offered by educational partners, online forums, personalized recognition items, and publicity honors.

Formed in 2002, the National Society of High School Scholars recognizes academic excellence at the high school level and encourages members of the organization to apply their unique talents, vision, and potential for the betterment of themselves and the world. Currently, there are more than 300,000 Society members, representing 20,000 high schools in over 120 countries. NSHSS provides scholarship opportunities for deserving young students. ***(PR)***

Battle of Champions tonight at Troy

It's all systems go for the most awaited lipsync competition dubbed "Battle of Champions," which will kick off tonight at the cozy bar known as TROY (the former Naked Stallion).

Sharing the limelight are eight drag queens who will battle it out for the prize of being called the best lip sync artist. Top contenders are Patrick, Paula, Angel, Tommy, Nips, Venus, Jacky and 2 more finalists. Aside from the major prizes, special awards will be given to Best in Costume, Best in Showmanship, Star of the Night and Miss Popularity.

The event is sponsored by Calvatron, Shirley's Coffee Shop, Club Mr. Wonderful, RJ Beauty Salon, Dondy Salon, Lito Espino, Video Haus, 4R Internet, Nora Alepuyo, Ben Borja, @Hair.Comb, Paquito Amores, Tattoo World, Aileen Beachamp, Punchline Bar and Romeo Cal. ***(PR)***

PET CARE TRAINING CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dandan Elementary School principal Jonas Barcinas poses with students and Rose Callier from the Pet Assistance and Welfare Services, shown here with her dog Wyatt, after a three-week pet care instruction at the DanDan Elementary School.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

NMC campus closed on Jan. 8

Northern Marianas College students, and all staff and faculty will be participating in a training seminar on Jan. 8, 2008 as part of the college's efforts to meet standards of accreditation regarding assessment and program review.

To ensure maximum participation, NMC campus will be closed on Jan. 8, 2008 and will resume normal business on Jan. 9, 2008.

For urgent matters, contact NMC security personnel at 234-5498 ext. 1911 and they will contact the President's Office. We apologize for any inconvenience the campus closure may cause. ***(PR)***

Tinian Jr./Sr. High start of classes

Tinian Jr. Sr. High School will open for Spring 2008 semester Jan. 10, 2008. There will be no homeroom and warning bell is at 7:55am, tardy bell at 8am. Class schedules may be picked up on Saturday, Jan. 5, 2008 from 8am to 4:30pm at the front office.

Report cards may be picked up anytime during normal working hours. ***(PR)***

Bayani Association election, party

The Bayani Association will hold its officers' election and inauguration on Jan. 6, at the Filipino Workers Resources Center, Philippine Overseas Labor Office at the Marianas Business Plaza (formerly Nauru Building).

The event, which will also serve as the association's New Year's Party, will be held from 1pm to 5pm. ***(PR)***

MHS Class of '83 meeting

The 25th year reunion of the Marianas High School's Class of '83 is just a few months away and we would like to remind those of you who have not purchased event tickets to do so now without delay. Our March 2008 deadline is fast approaching.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008, 7pm, at Ms. Frances (Mildred) Cruz's residence in Buenas Noches Street, DanDan Area. Please come and join us as we finalize plans for our reunion.

Contact any of the Steering Committee Members for details.

- Tonnei Camacho at 483-9665
- Viola Kaipan at 483-0214
- Ed Camacho at 483-5262
- Jane Tudela at 234-9571
- Frances Mildred Cruz at 483-0995
- Ester Teregeyo at 285-6284
- Ben Sablan at 287-1480
- Diego Songsong at 287-4300

Kagman High School reminders

Kagman High School students are reminded to pick up their class schedule at the cafeteria on Jan. 7 and 8, 2008, between 9am and 12pm. Jan. 7 is for all Juniors and Seniors, and Jan. 8 is for all Freshmen and Sophomores. To all parents, report card day is Jan. 11, 2008. ***(PR)***

TRICARE briefing on Friday

Reservists, their family, retirees, their families and survivors should know that on Jan. 5, 2008 at 9am there will be a briefing about TRICARE at the Professional Building at the Army Reserve Center. A TRICARE representative will be on island for that day only.

The briefing will last until 12pm at the Army Reserve Center.

Any questions or for further information, call Ruth Coleman at the Office of Military/Veterans Affairs at 664-2650 or SSG Noel Chargualaf at 483-7465 or 322-6680. ***(PR)***

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- Above discounts good for up to 6 persons (including VIP cardholder)

Pacific

PNG lawmakers give themselves $10M raise

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (The National/PIR)—Members of Parliament who head parliamentary committees in Papua New Guinea have voted to give themselves a rise in their allowances, and other perks and privileges that would cost taxpayers between PGK20 million [US$7.4 million] and PGK30 million [US$11 million].

They voted for the rise in their allowances, additional funding, purchase of vehicles, and hiring of additional staff members during a meeting of chairmen of parliamentary committees late last year.

Their push for the rise is contained in resolutions now before Deputy Speaker Francis Marus. It must be approved by the Salaries and Remuneration Commission and then Parliament before being effected.

There are 36 permanent, referral and standing committees in the PNG Parliament.

The November meeting, which approved the rise in perks and privileges, was attended by 18 parliamentary committee chairmen.

Documents obtained by The National show that the chairmen agreed during the meeting that K250,000 be allocated each year for each committee to perform their duties. That amounts to K9 million a year for all the committees.

They also unanimously agreed that special/select allocation of K40,000 per annum be increased to K100,000 to enable chairmen to recruit professional staff to assist them.

The permanent and referral committees wants their allocation of K20,000 to be increased to K50,000 to recruit qualified staff, while four officers are to be employed to fill current vacancies in the parliamentary committee secretariat division.

Parliamentary Services would also recruit at least two officers every year for the next five years to beef up staff strength of the committee secretariat, and arrange for officers from relevant Government agencies to be seconded to them to assist in research and advisory roles.

PACIFIC BRIEFS

Five charged with fuel theft in A. Samoa

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—Five people in American Samoa are being charged for the alleged theft of diesel fuel from oil company British Petroleum Southwest Pacific. Arrest warrants have been issued for two employees of British Petroleum and two employees of Mobil and an Asian fishing boat owner. The charges include felony stealing, conspiracy to commit felony stealing and receiving stolen property. It's alleged that the fuel company employees conspired with the fishing boat owner in a scheme that resulted in the fuel company not receiving payment for a quarter of a million gallons of diesel fuel. The scheme was uncovered during an audit by British Petroleum Fiji which noticed substantial losses from the local branch. Investigations are continuing and more people may be charged.

France blocks return of Maori head to Aotearoa

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—A French court has blocked plans to return the preserved head of a Maori from western France to New Zealand. Newstalk NZ reports... that the head, donated by a collector in 1875, had been held in a museum which decided last year to return it as an "ethical gesture of respect" for the Maori people. But the French culture ministry stepped in to block the transfer, arguing the head was now part of France's cultural heritage. An administrative court has ruled that authorities failed to consult a scientific committee before withdrawing the head from a national museum collection, blocking the transfer.

Pago Pago airline resumes Samoa service

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—The Pago Pago based airline South Pacific Express Inc or SPEX has resumed flights between American Samoa and Samoa. The airline grounded services on December 21st after an alleged altercation between a co pilot and the chief mechanic. The cancellation of flights stranded up to 500 passengers at the busiest travel period of the year. Many passengers cancelled their travel plans after they couldn't find seats on Polynesian and Inter Island Air. Guam based Freedom Air owns the Short 360 aircraft which SPEX flies and also provides pilots and mechanics. The chief mechanic and chief pilot were recalled to Guam and the co pilot has been forced to resign. The co pilot is to face criminal charges for allegedly assaulting the chief mechanic.

Fiji film industry plunges in '07 by $96M

SUVA. Fiji (Fiji Times/PIR)—Economic activity generated by the Fiji Audio Visual Commission in 2007 dropped by FJ$150 million [US$96.8 million] over the previous year, says chief executive officer, Taniela Bolea.

Bolea said FAVC generated more than FJ$27 million [US$17.4 million] worth of business in 2007 compared to $179 million [US$115.5 million] in 2006.

He said mostly small television serials were shot in Fiji last year.

Some major projects were lost to Queensland (Australia), Bolea said.

He said the commission hoped 2008 would be a better year.

"While we have quite a few projects we will not be able to confirm the number of projects until the first quarter of the year."

Bolea said shooting for most productions started in the second quarter of the year.

From 2002-2006, Government invested $6.05million in the FAVC, with the commission generating $324million worth of new economic activity and 7000 full-time equivalent jobs were created.

Bolea said the FAVC would look to review their legislation to make incentives more attractive to a wider range of producers.

Fijis audio visual industry had potential but there were challenges such as the political climate and poor infrastructure, which, he said, were a hindrance.

Earlier, the FAVC said film producers still lacked confidence in the country.

Chairman Richard Broadbridge said as with any other investor, producers were concerned about the security situation.

Broadbridge said competition with other countries such as Australia was tough but Fiji was trying its best to lure more movie producers.

Fiji is still not 100 per cent there in terms of confidence, Broadbridge said

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Island Snapshots

CRIME STOPPERS MONTH

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial joins NMI Crime Stoppers Program board chair Jim Arenovski, Department of Public Safety Commissioner Rebecca Warfield, Attorney General Matthew T. Gregory, Department of Lands and Natural Resources Secretary Dr. Ignacio Dela Cruz, Military Veterans Affairs Office executive director Ruth Coleman, Chief Prosecutor Jeffery Warfield Sr., MVA deputy managing director Judy Torres, Division of Youth Services director Debra Inos, Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Jim Barry, DPS spokeswoman Lei Ogumoro, and other NMI Crime Stoppers Program officials and supporters during Thursday's proclamation signing declaring January as NMI Crime Stoppers Month on Capital Hill.

HOUSE SESSION

House speaker Oscar M. Babauta listens during Thursday's session at the House of Representatives on Capital Hill.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

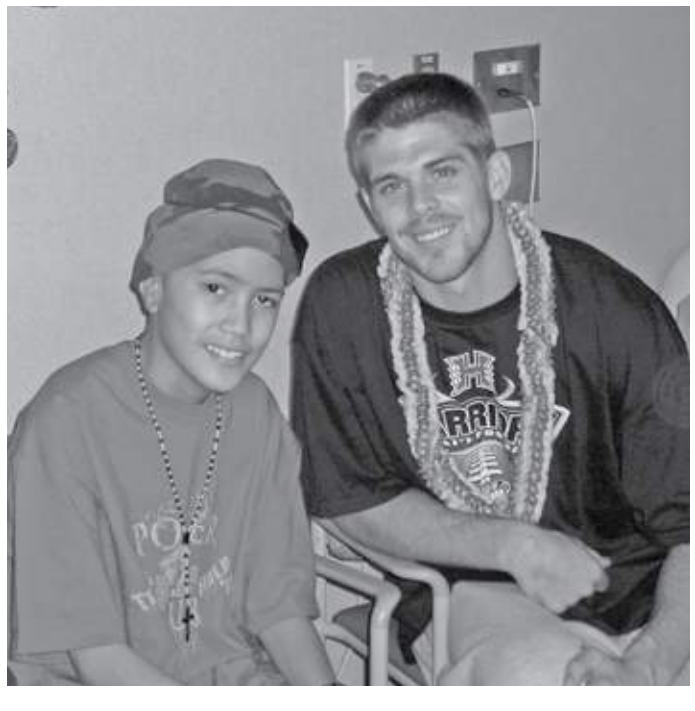
House Minority Leader Arnold I. Palacios seems to be in deep thought together with other representatives during Thursday's session at the House of Representatives on Capital Hill.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

FAT JOY SLIM

Members of the Fat Joy Slim Band entertains the crowd during the New Year's Eve countdown party at the Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ



ANGEL OF HOPE

AngelRay Guerrero, left, has his picture taken with Colt Brennan, a University of Hawaii quarterback, during the athlete's recent visit to the Kapiolani Women and Children Hospital. As part of the holidays activities, children who are undergoing chemotherapy treatment at the hospital are visited by UH football and basketball players to encourage the kids that there is hope.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

AT KILILI BEACH

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Guest workers write open letters and testimonies to U.S. Congress Resource Committee members and to other federal officials at the Kilili Beach as the sun sets during a recent gathering in response to rights advocate Wendy Doromalis call for a letter-writing campaign to press U.S. Congress into acting the call for improved immigration status for long-term alien workers in the CNMI.

KIDS AT PLAY

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Children play with sparklers on Pakpak Beach in San Antonio.

BIRTHDAY GIRL

Happy birthday greetings go out to Ruka, who is celebrating her birthday today, Jan. 4, 2008. Happy birthday greeting from Raju and friends.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BEACH HUNT

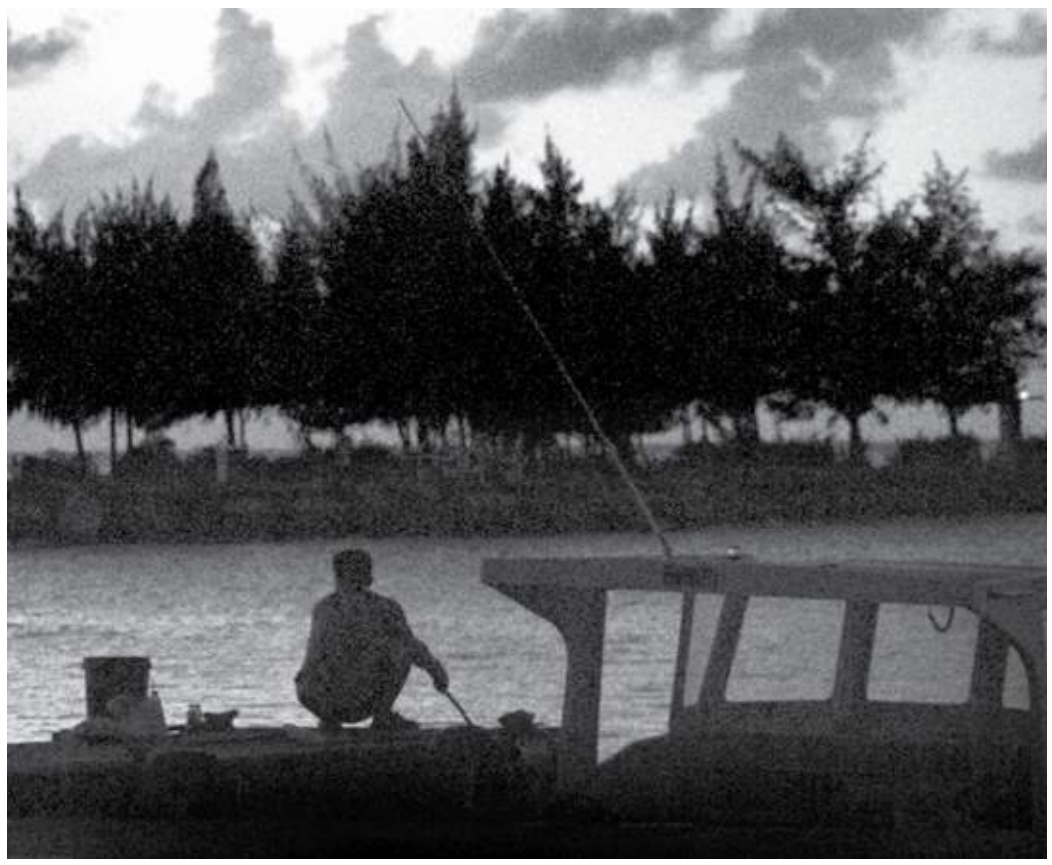
A mother and child spend their afternoon picking up shells on Pakpak Beach in San Antonio.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

AIRBUS

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Tourists wait to board the new Northwest Airlines Airbus A330 at the Francisco C. Ada/ Saipan International Airport departure area.



RELAXING AT THE END OF THE DAY

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

A man spends his late afternoon watching the sunset from the Outer Cove Marina.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

A couple enjoys the view of the Managaha Island from the Outer Cove Marina.

Business

Oil futures rise to $100 a barrel

NEW YORK (AP)—Crude oil prices briefly soared to $100 a barrel Wednesday for the first time, reaching that milestone amid an unshakeable view that global demand for oil and petroleum products will outstrip supplies.

Surging economies in China and India fed by oil and gasoline have sent prices soaring over the past year, while tensions in oil producing nations like Nigeria and Iran have increasingly made investors nervous and invited speculators to drive prices even higher.

Violence in Nigeria helped give crude the final push to $100. Bands of armed men invaded Port Harcourt, the center of Nigeria's oil industry Tuesday, attacking two police stations and raiding the lobby of a major hotel. Word that several Mexican oil export ports were closed due to rough weather added to the gains, as did a report that OPEC may not be able to meet its share of global oil demand by 2024.

AP

Wayne Holland of the Suburban Propane company delivers oil in Barre, Vt., Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008.

Oil prices are within the range of inflation-adjusted highs set in early 1980. Depending on how the adjustment is calculated, $38 a barrel then would be worth $96 to $103 or more today.

The White House on Wednesday said it would not release oil from the nation's strategic reserves to drive prices lower.

At the pump, gas prices rose 0.6 cent Wednesday to a national average of $3.049 a gallon, according to AAA and the Oil Price Information Service. Gas prices, which typically lag the futures market, have edged higher in recent days, following oil's approach to $100.

Gas prices peaked at $3.227 a gallon in May as refiners faced unprecedented maintenance issues and struggled to produce enough gasoline to meet demand. A similar scenario is expected this spring, when gas prices could peak above $3.40 a gallon, according to the Energy Department's Energy Information Administration.

$100 oil may pinch but not faze consumer

NEW YORK (AP)—With oil having briefly touched the once unfathomable price of $100 a barrel, consumers can expect the cost of filling their gas tanks, heating their homes—in fact, the price of most everything—to also keep rising.

Still, analysts don't expect record-high prices by themselves to send the economy into recession, simply because expensive as oil is, energy doesn't consume as big a chunk of Americans' budget as it did decades ago.

"So far, consumers have done an amazing job of ignoring high oil prices, not to mention falling home prices," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's.

A barrel of light, sweet crude reached triple digits for the first time Wednesday, soaring 44 percent since August and 57 percent since the end of 2006. Meanwhile, gasoline prices at the pump reached a national average of $3.05 a gallon, according to AAA and the Oil Price Information Service. That's below their May peak of $3.23 a gallon but likely to go higher as the spring and summer approach.

"It's just crazy, I don't know how much worse it can get," said Susan Witte, of Fairless Hills, Pa., while shopping at a suburban Philadelphia sporting goods store one recent morning.

But Chicagoan Fraz Baig was unfazed as oil approached its milestone, although rising prices are making it more expensive for him to gas up his just purchased 2008 Infiniti FX SUV.

"I'm doing well financially and I'm single, so I'm not really worried," said Baig, who works in Internet technology solution sales for IBM Corp.

Rising energy prices were cited as a contributing factor in disappointing sales for the just-ended holiday season, along with the continuing slump in housing and an overall uneasiness about the economy. But economists say that generally, the jump in oil is less devastating than previous spikes because incomes have risen faster than energy costs.

In 1981, 14 percent to 15 percent of the nation's gross domestic product was spent on energy, according to Lester Lave, professor of economics at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business. That's fallen to 7 percent today.

In part, that's because energy efficiency has increased.

"It's just not (as) important to the economy anymore," Lave said. "Prices are not high enough so that they're going to get middle-income people to change their behavior."

Fed fears worsening credit market

WASHINGTON (AP)—Federal Reserve policymakers worried at their December meeting about the potential for a vicious cycle to develop in which credit problems could worsen. That could hurt economic growth and force the Fed to act more aggressively in cutting rates, according to meeting minutes made public Wednesday.

"Some members noted the risk of an unfavorable feedback loop in which credit market conditions restrained economic growth further, leading to additional tightening of credit," the minutes said. "Such an adverse development could require substantial further easing" of rates, the minutes revealed.

Problems in the housing, credit and financial markets drove the Fed to do an about-face on Dec. 11 and slice its key interest rate yet again in the hope it would bolster an economy that was losing speed.

Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and all but one of his colleagues agreed to trim the Fed key rate by one-quarter percentage point to 4.25 percent, a two-year low. The central bank ordered its key rate lowered three times last year; the December reduction was most recent one.

The decision to cut rates essentially marked a reversal for the central bank, which had hinted at its October meeting that the Fed's two rate cuts probably would be enough to help the economy survive the housing and credit stresses. But the economy's problems intensified after that meeting, forcing the Fed to change its stance.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

US manufacturing sector contracts

NEW YORK (AP)—The U.S. manufacturing economy unexpectedly contracted in December, ending a streak of 10 consecutive months of growth and sinking to its lowest point in almost five years, a private research group said Wednesday. The decline suggests that the overall economy may be weakening faster than some economists predicted. The figures are closely watched because a slowdown in factory production can translate to job cuts, which in turn reduces consumer spending—a major component of the economy. The Institute for Supply Management, a Tempe, Ariz.-based private research group, said its manufacturing index registered 47.7 last month, down 3.1 percentage points from the 50.8 recorded in November. A reading above 50 indicates growth; below that level indicates contraction.

Calif. sues EPA over greenhouse gas rules

SACRAMENTO (AP)—California sued the federal government Wednesday in its ongoing bid to set the country's first greenhouse gas limits on cars, trucks and SUVs, providing new data to show its program is superior to a federal plan. The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court of Appeals asks the federal Environmental Protection Agency to review its own decision last month to deny California a waiver it and 16 other states need to regulate greenhouse gases from new cars and trucks. EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson said the federal government had a national plan to raise fuel economy standards and dismissed California's arguments that it faced extraordinary threats from climate change.

FAA: Atlanta airport is nation's busiest

ATLANTA (AP)—For the third year in a row, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport has retained its title as the nation's busiest airport in terms of flights, according to preliminary government data released Wednesday. The Atlanta airport logged 994,466 flights in 2007, up 1.8 percent from 976,447 flights in 2006, the Federal Aviation Administration said. Flights include takeoffs and landings. Its rival, Chicago O'Hare International Airport, was listed second busiest, with 935,000 flights in 2007. That number was down 2.4 percent from the 958,643 flights it had in 2006, the FAA said.

Hyundai predicts 2008 sales increase

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Hyundai Motor Co. forecast a double-digit increase in sales for 2008 on expanded overseas production and stronger marketing. Global sales this year will total 3.11 million vehicles, an increase of 19.6 percent from 2007, Hyundai said in a statement Wednesday. That will generate 46 trillion won ($49 billion) in revenue in 2008, the company said, an increase of 12.2 percent from the year before. Sales grew 4.1 percent to 2.6 million vehicles in 2007, Hyundai said.

Stocks drop on weak manufacturing report

NEW YORK (AP)—Wall Street skidded lower Wednesday after a weaker-than-expected reading on the manufacturing sector and a spike in oil prices to $100 a barrel triggered concerns of a further slowdown in the overall economy. The major indexes each lost more than 1 percent, with the Dow Jones industrials giving up more than 200 points. It was the blue chip index's biggest point decline for the first day of trading in a new year. The Dow fell 220.86, or 1.67 percent, to 13,043.96. The blue chips briefly fell below 13,000 for the first time since November. Broader stock indicators also fell sharply. The Standard & Poor's 500 index slid 21.20, or 1.44 percent, to 1,447.16, and the Nasdaq composite index fell 42.65, or 1.61 percent, to 2,609.63.

STOCK Portfolio

ASIAN MARKETS

AUSTRALIA	6,372.600 Down 61.500 (-0.96%)
HONG KONG	27,080.00 Down 480.52 (-1.74%)
JAKARTA	2,713.585 Down 17.9221 (-0.66%)
TOKYO	15,307.78 Down 256.91 (-1.65%)
K. LUMPUR	1,435.68 Down 9.35 (-0.65%)
MANILA	3,501.38 Down 115.91 (-3.20%%)
SINGAPORE	3,408.16 Down 53.06 (-1.53%)
SEOUL	1,850.06 Down 3.39 (-0.18%)
BANGKOK	832.03 Down 10.94 (-1.30%)

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	13,043.96	-220.86
NASDAQ	2,609.63	-42.65
S&P	1,447.16	-21.20

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.1324
British Pound	0.5042
Canadian Dollar	0.9943
Chinese Renmbi	7.2728
Euro	0.6799
Hong Kong Dollar	7.813
Indian Rupee	39.47
Indonesian Rupiah	9415
Japanese Yen	109.64
Malaysian Ringgit	3.3065
New Zealand Dollar	1.2902
Philippine Peso	41.22
Singapore Dollar	1.4364
South Korean Won	938.5
Swiss Franc	1.1188
Taiwan Dollar	32.487
Thailand Baht	29.8

In U.S. dollar terms

Source: Associated Press

Rising by resolution

By MARY ELLEN SLAYTER
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

Only 12 percent of workers made career-related resolutions at the beginning of 2006, but nearly three-quarters of those who did achieved their goals by the end of the year.

WASHINGTON—Workers who make career resolutions—and create a plan to make them happen—can see benefits that pay off for years.

Only 12 percent of workers made career-related resolutions at the beginning of 2006, but nearly three-quarters of those who did achieved their goals by the end of the year, a survey by staffing agency Accountemps found last January.

The top career resolution: to learn new skills. Resolving to earn a raise or promotion and improve work/life balance were close behind.

These goals can seem simple enough, but as with losing weight or paying down debt, the path to lasting success can be complicated. The secret is to break those big goals into small, manageable tasks. And don't think you have to go it alone. Help is available. Here are a few of the most common career-related resolutions and some resources that can help you simplify things and stay on track throughout the year.

LEARN NEW SKILLS

This is the most popular, and it's also the most accessible if you think broadly about your paths for learning. It doesn't mean you have to return to campus full time or spend a lot of money. Find out whether your company offers tuition assistance, and if so, how to qualify. Ask whether there are any classes or training being offered on-site. Consider community colleges and online options. They can be cheaper and are likely to offer more convenient hours for working adults.

IMPROVE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Family duties, long hours and crushing commutes leave plenty of us frazzled. If moving or changing jobs isn't possible, look for ways to steal back some time at home. A professional organizer can help you streamline your daily routines and contain the chaos. One way to find one is through the Web site of the National Association of Professional Organizers (www.napo.net). Services range from general clutter-busting to feng shui makeovers. Have the organizer start with that disaster you call a home office.

INCREASE YOUR EARNINGS

First, find out whether your pay and benefits are in line with market norms. Then, be specific about just how much more you want to make. Ten percent? $500 a month? Once you have a reasonable number in mind, create a strategy that will help you reach that goal. As part of your annual review, ask your boss to help you come up with the criteria to merit the raise. A lot of people get the shivers at the merest thought of bringing up this topic. To overcome this, start by reading a guide to negotiating, such as "Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In," by Roger Fisher, Bruce Patton and William Ury. Short on time? Check out "Next-Day Salary Negotiation: Prepare Tonight to Get Your Best Pay Tomorrow," by Maryanne Wegerbauer.

CHANGE CAREERS

If it's not just the job that's got you down, but the profession as a whole, it's time to switch careers. A professional career coach can guide you through this decision and the individual steps to make it happen. A pro can be especially helpful if you're not quite sure what the next step can be. As a bonus, many coaches are also professional resume writers and can help you translate your experience into language that prospective employers in your new field will understand. You can find one through the Web site of the Professional Association of Resume Writers & Career Coaches (www.parw.com).

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

If you hope 2008 will end with your name atop the company letterhead, check out the Small Business Administration's online assessment (www.sba.gov/assessmenttool/index.html). This tool will walk you through a series of questions to determine how ready you are to start your own company and where you need help. When you're finished, you'll have a list of recommendations on key topics, including funding, taxes and intellectual property laws.

Looking for a mentor? Start with someone you know

By MARY ELLEN SLAYTER
(C) 2007, THE WASHINGTON POST

Dennis Damp, author of *The Book of U.S. Government Jobs*, recently was a guest on Career Tracks, an online discussion about workplace issues. Here are some questions he was asked, and his responses.

Q. I am in the intern program at Health and Human Services. I am new to the federal government and am looking for a mentor; there is no mentoring program at my agency. What are some of the qualities that I should look for in a mentor? How can I best utilize the relationship?

A. In the federal sector, there are many options. Since they don't have an official mentoring program, look for someone in your office or agency whom you know personally or whom others may recommend who volunteers without asking, is congenial and is knowledgeable about your area of expertise. Start with your supervisor and ask him or her for assistance and a recommendation. Internships are designed to train potential employees in complex areas of operations, and interns need considerable guidance, training and encouragement. This should be built into the internship program, but don't be afraid to ask for help if it's not.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q. I have been retired for three years. I have been trying to get a job since the summer and have gotten no offers. I stated in my cover letter that I have been renovating my condo, and that I have knowledge of MS Word, Excel and Office Access. Do you think my gap in employment is stopping me from being hired? I was employed at the same company for 18 years.

A. As long as you explain your break in service, you should be fine. Employers need to know why you had a three-year break in service; retirement alone may be sufficient to explain this. Retirees return to work for many reasons.

■ ■ ■ ■

Edited questions from Career Tracks, an online discussion about workplace issues.

Q: In April I am moving to Florida. I work at a bank that does not have branches there. While I would like to stay in banking, I have a strong background in reception/assistant work, sales, etc. Do you think I would benefit from a head hunter? Who pays to use one, the company or me? When should I start applying? I will have to go from here to Florida for interviews, so I want to try to schedule them within the same two or three days. How do I adjust for cost of living when negotiating salary?

A: A head hunter could be helpful, but isn't necessary. Head hunters are paid a commission by the employer when they find someone (read: you) to fill a job.

Online salary calculators can help you estimate of the cost of living in your new home, as well as typical salaries for your position. Online job ads are one place to start; check the local newspaper's classifieds section.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q: I can't seem to get my foot in the door. Because I moved frequently for my (now ex-) husband's job, I don't have a lot of tenure and my experience is sort of random. This means that I never get called for interviews based on my resume. On the other hand, once I get in the interview room and explain myself, everything goes swimmingly. So how do I get in the room?

A: Get your face in before your resume. This is generally a more effective strategy for everyone, not just people who have bounced around a lot. Your resume should come in attached to a referral, ideally from someone who can speak well of your work.

DOLLARS AND SENSE

Rate freeze: Most won't get help

By DAVID UFFINGTON
(C) 2008 KING FEATURES SYND., INC.

At the same time it was announced that mortgage foreclosures are at an all-time high, President Bush unveiled a new plan (Hope Now) to help people with subprime loans to keep their homes. The plan as outlined would help approximately 1.2 million homeowners by freezing their introductory teaser interest rates for five years.

The problem began when millions of people bought homes with low starter interest rates, believing that the value of the homes would rise, allowing them to refinance. The reality is that the housing market has tanked and many homes aren't worth what people paid for them, making refinancing impossible, just as all those interest rates are due to reset to much higher amounts.

Very few will actually be able to take advantage of the five-year interest rate freeze, however. The Center for Responsible Lending estimates that of the 1.2 million homeowners targeted for assistance, only 145,000 will actually qualify because of the strict guidelines.

Those with subprime loans have been asked to call 1-888-995-HOPE to speak with counselors "24 hours a day, 7 days a week" to get started on the paperwork for having their interest rates frozen for five years.

Here's what happens when you call:

If you want information on foreclosure, they will talk to you.

If you want to learn more about the rate freeze, you'll be told to call your lender.

You qualify for the rate freeze if:

- You have bad credit but are current on your payments, and you live in the house.
- Your mortgage was taken out between Jan. 1, 2005 and July 31, 2007, and if the interest rate is set to rise between Jan. 1, 2008, and July 31, 2010.

You do not qualify for the rate freeze if:

- You have good credit but are in danger of falling behind on your payments.
- You have equity.
- You have a traditional ARM, no matter how high the rate will go when it resets.
- You have bad credit and are behind on your payments.
- Your interest rate already reset.
- You don't live in the house.
- You already refinanced.

The HOPE program is voluntary. Your lender doesn't have to agree to help you with a rate freeze. If you fall behind in payments, the lender can still foreclose.

David Uffington regrets that he cannot personally answer reader questions, but will incorporate them into his column whenever possible. Write to him in care of King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or send e-mail to columnreply@gmail.com.

Nation

Candidates struggle to Iowa finish line

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP)—John Edwards willed himself through a 36-hour marathon, Barack Obama dispatched canvassers onto frigid streets and Hillary Rodham Clinton carried bagels and coffee to campaign volunteers, competing one last day for victory in the Iowa caucuses—the first statewide vote in the U.S. presidential race.

Looking for a win that would give them priceless momentum in upcoming votes in other states, leading Republicans exchanged unpleasantries as the most wide-open U.S. presidential race in a half-century or more faced its first wave of voting.

"You just don't know what is going to happen," confessed Mitt Romney, unwilling to forecast success over Republican rival Mike Huckabee in Thursday's first contest of the race for the White House.

"This country is ready for a leader who will bring us together," Obama said in a two-minute commercial televised at the dinner hour. A first-term Illinois senator seeking to become America's first black president, he added, "That's the only way we're going to win this election. And that's how we'll actually fix health care, make college affordable, become energy independent and end this war."

Clinton, seeking to become America's first female president, reached out with a campaign-closing commercial broadcast of her own. "If you stand with me for one night, I will stand up for you every day as your president," the former first lady said. "I'll work my heart out to bring the country we love the new beginning it needs and I will be ready to start on Day One."

Edwards' campaign selected Doug Bishop, a laid-off Maytag appliance factory worker, to deliver a televised pitch for the former North Carolina senator.

"I want a guy that's going to sit down and look a 7-year-old kid in the eye and tell him, 'I'm going to fight for your dad's job,'" Bishop said as he introduces Edwards, the Democrats' 2004 vice presidential nominee, to an Iowa crowd. "That's what I want. I'm going to do my best to make sure that my children aren't the first generation of Americans that I can't look them in the eye and say, 'You're going to have a better life than I had.'"

Increasingly, the candidates looked beyond Iowa to the states that quickly follow. Republican Sen. John McCain spent most of the day in New Hampshire, which holds a primary on Jan. 8, and his campaign ordered television advertising in Michigan, with a primary one week later.

But first there was Iowa, snow piled high and frozen—and an electorate warmed by the attention of Republican and Democratic hopefuls in the most wide-open presidential race in a half-century or more.

Late pre-caucus polls generally pointed toward a close three-way finish among Democrats and an unpredictable two-man struggle for the Republicans. A quarter of likely caucus-goers reported they either had not made up their minds or could still change them. That was not a surprise in Iowa, where 21 percent of participants in the 2004 caucuses said they had made up their minds in the final three days .

That only added to the urgency of the campaigns, which stood ready with snow shovels and baby sitters—to make sure supporters were able to leave home for the caucuses—and delivered reminders to voters via Facebook and phone. Romney said his campaign made 12,000 calls on Sunday alone.

AP

Democratic presidential hopeful, Sen. Barack Obama D-Ill., speaks at a campaign stop Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008 in Waterloo, Iowa.

Unsurprisingly, there were reports of Republican campaign dirty tricks—anonymous phone calls to Romney supporters directing them to incorrect caucus locations, and a recorded message disparaging former Sen. Fred Thompson of Tennessee, who hoped for a third-place finish to rescue his faltering candidacy.

There were predictions of a heavy Democratic turnout from election officials in scattered locations, who also reported independents switching their registration to Democratic so they could vote. "From what I can ascertain from the calls that we're getting, it looks like the Democratic caucuses are just going to be flooded," said Richard Bauer, elections supervisor in Scott County along the state's eastern edge.

Obama, in particular, has bet his campaign on the support of first-time caucus-goers, independents as well as Democrats who could be attracted to his message of political change. A victory in Iowa would validate the strategy, and presumably give him a boost in New Hampshire, where independents can vote in either primary.

Romney, more than his Republican rivals, needed a first-place finish in Iowa, where he has outspent his foes by a wide margin in hopes of making himself the man to beat for his party's nomination. A win would allow him to turn back Huckabee's surprising ascent in Iowa, and give him bragging rights as he pivots to confront McCain in New Hampshire.

Polls in Iowa show McCain making last-minute headway since he received an endorsement from the state's largest newspaper, The Des Moines Register. A third-place finish within reach, he decided to fly back for one final round of Iowa campaigning. "I have the knowledge, experience and judgment to lead this nation and to make sure we never ever send young Americans into combat to fight and to sacrifice unless our goal is victory," he told a crowd of about 100 people in an airport hangar in Dubuque.

Romney sounded almost nostalgic as he made his way through the day, but he found time to poke at both his leading rivals.

He defended himself against a McCain ad challenging his readiness to manage national security issues. "Senator McCain is an honorable person, He's been in the Senate for 25 years or more. And so people have a lot of talk there, a lot of suggestions about what other people ought to do, but I've actually been leading during that time."

Huckabee, his ascent powered by evangelical Christian voters, told voters he was a consistent conservative—a not-so-gentle reminder that Romney once supported abortion rights and gun control laws. "You can look at my record and find out that all the way back, as far as you can find me saying or doing anything, I believe the sanctity of human life is a key, critical cornerstone issue for the future of our country," he said in Fort Dodge.

Associated Press writers Beth Fouhy, Glen Johnson, Amy Lorentzen, David Pitt, Libby Quaid, Liz Sidoti, David Pitt and Nafeesa Syeed in Iowa contributed to this report.

BY THE NUMBERS

What's in a number during Iowa's caucuses? Everything

By RON FOURNIER
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

AMES, Iowa (AP)—Who is going to win Iowa's caucuses? We do not have that answer just yet, but here is a by-the-numbers look at the candidates and their wildly unpredictable campaigns.

Let us start with the voters:

1: Number of days until Republicans and Democrats gather to choose their presidential candidates in what are called caucus meetings.

124,000: Number of Democrats who caucused in 2004. Just 90,000 Republicans did so in 2000, the last contested year.

2.75 million: Approximate number of Iowans who will not attend caucuses. That reflects the state's entire population minus estimated turnout.

41: Percentage of Democrats who waited until the final three days of the 2004 campaign to choose their candidate.

5: Number of candidates with a reasonable chance of winning: Republicans Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney, and Democrats Hillary Rodham Clinton, John Edwards and Barack Obama.

■ ■ ■

THE DEMOCRATS:

17: Number of times Clinton said "change" in a recent stump speech, hoping to convince voters in a throw-the-bums-out mood that the New York senator and former first lady can reform Washington from the inside. "Everybody in this campaign is talking about change," she said.

23: Number of times Obama said "change," hoping his passion overcomes the Illinois senator's lack of experience. "Everyone is talking about change," he said. Get the point?

82: Number of countries Clinton says she has visited, which she equates with foreign policy experience.

24: Number of times Edwards, the former North Carolina senator, referred to special interests, corporate interests or greedy companies in a recent stump speech.

0: How often he referred to labor unions as a special interest.

0: How often Edwards mentioned that his former campaign manager runs a union-backed organization that is airing ads supportive of Edwards, raising questions about possible illegal coordination.

19: How often New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson mentioned Iraq in a recent speech, hoping to cast his rivals as not firmly anti-war. "Some of my fellow candidates have decided to stop talking about Iraq," he said. "Our brave troops in Iraq seem to have been forgotten."

500: The number of people who attended a rally for Delaware Sen. Joe Biden on Tuesday, a huge crowd for a candidate polling in single digits. Any of the Republican candidates would be thrilled to draw such a big audience, which suggests that Republican voters are not as energized as Democrats.

13: Number of times Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut said "results" in his stump speech, suggesting it takes a white-haired Washington veteran like him to produce any.

49th: The name of the Des Moines, Iowa, street where Dodd and his family rented a home for the caucus campaign.

■ ■ ■

THE REPUBLICANS:

3: Number of dogs on Huckabee's campaign bus. It is also the number of times the former Arkansas governor said "cynical" during a news conference he called to both unveil a negative ad and denounce negative ads.

2: Number of times he called Romney "dishonest" in the ad.

2b: The page and section where the Des Moines Register placed its story about Huckabee's news conference. While the national press corps laughed at Huckabee during the news conference, Iowans: the folks who really matter: may take seriously his pledge to forsake negative politics.

37: Percentage of Republican caucus-goers in 2000 who said they were part of the "religious right."

15: Years since Huckabee entered politics as a former Baptist minister.

2: Number of sentences between when former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani said he doesn't mean to sound like he's taking singular credit for reducing crime in New York City, and when he said, "But the reality is I was elected to reduce crime in New York City, and I did."

1: Number of candidates compelled to argue he's a factor in the race. "I think we are very relevant." Rudy Giuliani told The Associated Press.

6: Millions of dollars Mitt Romney spent to air ads in Iowa.

5: Millions of dollars Huckabee raised in the fourth quarter, his best showing by far.

2nd: Where Fred Thompson, the actor and former Tennessee senator, said he needs to finish in Iowa.

3rd: Where he'll be lucky to finish. One poll had him tied for fourth with surging U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas.

■ ■ ■

How soon do we forget:

6: Number of days until the New Hampshire primary.

Editor's Note: Ron Fournier has covered politics for The Associated Press for nearly 20 years.

Criminal probe opened over CIA tapes

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Justice Department opened a full criminal investigation Wednesday into the destruction of CIA interrogation videotapes, putting the politically charged probe in the hands of a mob-busting public corruption prosecutor with a reputation for being independent.

Attorney General Michael Mukasey announced that he was appointing John Durham, a federal prosecutor in Connecticut, to oversee the investigation of a case that has challenged the Bush administration's controversial handling of terrorism suspects.

The CIA acknowledged last month that in 2005 it destroyed videos of officers using tough interrogation methods while questioning two al-Qaida suspects. The acknowledgment sparked a congressional inquiry and a preliminary investigation by Justice into whether the CIA violated any laws or obstructed congressional inquiries such as the one led by the Sept. 11 Commission.

"The Department's National Security Division has recommended, and I have concluded, that there is a basis for initiating a criminal investigation of this matter, and I have taken steps to begin that investigation," Mukasey said in a statement released Wednesday.

Durham, who has served with the Justice Department for 25 years, has a reputation as one of the nation's most relentless prosecutors. He was appointed to investigate the FBI's use of mob informants in Boston, an investigation that sent former FBI agent John Connolly to prison.

"Nobody in this country is above the law, an FBI agent or otherwise," Durham said in 2002 after Connolly's conviction.

Mukasey made the move after prosecutors from the Eastern District of Virginia, which includes the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Va., removed themselves from the case. CIA Inspector General John L. Helgerson, who worked with the Justice Department on the preliminary inquiry, also removed himself.

"The CIA will of course cooperate fully with this investigation as it has with the others into this matter," agency spokesman Mark Mansfield said.

Mukasey named Durham the acting U.S. attorney on the case, a designation the Justice Department frequently makes when top prosecutors take themselves off a case. He will not serve as a special prosecutor like Patrick Fitzgerald, who operated autonomously while investigating the 2003 leak of a CIA operative's identity.

"The Justice Department went out and got somebody with complete independence and integrity," said former Connecticut U.S. Attorney Stanley Twardy, who worked with Durham. "No politics whatsoever. It's going to be completely by the book and he's going to let the chips fall where they may."

Md. inmate who fled hospital is killed

LAUREL, Md. (AP)—An inmate who escaped from a hospital Wednesday, briefly taking a worker hostage and stealing two getaway cars, was captured and killed by police hours later in a cemetery, authorities said.

Kelvin Poke, 45, overpowered guards at Laurel Regional Hospital and fired several shots before fleeing, authorities said. Once outside, he shot out the window of a car and drove away, dumping the driver, said Maryland State Police spokesman Greg Shipley.

He was captured hours later about 30 miles away. Officers had tailed a suspicious vehicle—a white Ford Explorer with flat tires—into a cemetery shortly after 3 p.m. Poke got out of the vehicle and opened fire on police, who then shot back, police said.

Poke was taken to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead, said Major Joseph McCann of Prince George's County police.

A woman who was in the vehicle with Poke was not seriously injured, and police believe she may have been a victim.

Poke fled the hospital Wednesday morning, two days after he was admitted while complaining of chest pains. He was wearing leg shackles but not handcuffs on the hospital's fourth floor when he overpowered several prison guards and took two guns, apparently dumping one before fleeing.

Poke fired at his shackles inside the hospital and overpowered a hospital security guard who responded to the noise, authorities said. He held the guard hostage as he made his way to the lobby, then fled alone.

Shipley said Poke left the hospital wearing Department of Corrections-issued jeans and white socks, but no shirt and no shoes.

The first car Poke used to flee was later found on fire in northeast Washington, D.C., and another vehicle was carjacked nearby, police said. The driver of the first car was shot in the head, but was expected to survive, authorities said.

Ariz. beauty queen accused of kidnapping

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP)—A law school student and former beauty queen who has posed for a racy calendar while brandishing a weapon has been accused of kidnapping, biting and threatening a former boyfriend with a handgun.

Fulbright

Kumari Fulbright, 25, who is midway through her second year in law school, faces a long prison term if convicted of kidnapping, armed robbery, aggravated robbery and two counts of aggravated assault.

Fulbright, who competed for the Miss Arizona title in 2005 and 2006, recently completed a semester-long unpaid stint clerking for a federal judge, U.S. District Judge Raner Collins, his office said. She also poses wearing a shiny black bikini in a 2008 calendar that features women holding guns.

In the Dec. 18 indictment, Fulbright is accused of holding and torturing her 24-year-old ex-boyfriend in early December with the help of three other men, including another man she had previously dated.

Authorities think the dispute began because the ex-boyfriend was believed to have stolen jewlery given to Fulbright by the former beau suspected of helping in the attack.

Fulbright invited the man to her apartment, then excused herself to shower, said police spokesman Sgt. Fabian Pacheco. Then two men showed up and bound him with plastic ties and duct tape, accused him of taking the jewelry, and threatened to shoot him with pistols, Pacheco said.

When Fulbright finished her shower, she allegedly bit the man on his forearm, right hand and ear, held a butcher knife to his head, and told him she was going to kill him.

Authorities said the man was taken to another home, where the assault continued, then took him back to Fulbright's house, where she guarded him with a gun.

ACROSS THE NATION

50 hurt in NC bus, tractor-trailer wreck

HENDERSON, N.C. (AP)—A Greyhound bus slammed into a tractor-trailer Wednesday and plunged down an embankment, injuring about 50 people, officials said. At least two people were critically injured and airlifted to UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill, said hospital spokeswoman Stephanie Crayton. The bus was traveling from Richmond, Va., to Raleigh on U.S. 1 when a tractor-trailer ahead of it made a turn and the bus failed to slow down, said Sgt. Steve Green, a spokesman for the North Carolina Highway Patrol. After hitting the truck, the bus ran off the shoulder and down an embankment, tipping on its side, Green said.

Texas bus crash kills 1; dozens hurt

HOUSTON (AP)—A chartered bus coming from Mexico veered off a highway early Wednesday and overturned, killing one passenger and injuring dozens of others, at least six of them critically, authorities said. Some of the passengers crawled out an emergency exit on the roof. The bus had left Monterrey, Mexico, on Tuesday evening and was headed to Houston when it crashed several hours before dawn south of Victoria, about 125 miles southwest of Houston, authorities said.

NJ lawmakers consider slavery apology

TRENTON, N.J. (AP)—New Jersey could become the first Northern state to apologize for slavery under a measure due for a legislative committee hearing this week. "This is not too much to ask of the state of New Jersey," said Assemblyman William Payne, sponsor of the proposal. "All that is being requested of New Jersey is to say three simple words: 'We are sorry.'"Legislators in Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia have issued formal apologies for slavery. According to the proposal, New Jersey had one of the largest slave populations in the Northern colonies and was the last state in the Northeast to formally abolish slavery, not doing so until 1846.

Victim to be heard at husband's trial

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Julie Jensen will essentially testify from the grave when her husband's murder trial begins this week. Shortly before her death in 1998, Jensen told police, a neighbor and her son's teacher that she suspected her spouse was trying to kill her, court documents show. She gave a letter to the neighbor that said that if she died, Mark Jensen should be the first suspect. "I pray I'm wrong + nothing happens ... but I am suspicious of Mark's suspicious behaviors + fear for my demise," she wrote. Until recent years, using such evidence in court was virtually unheard of because of constitutional guarantees that give criminal defendants the right to confront their accusers. But the Wisconsin Supreme Court created new rules, prompted by a U.S. Supreme Court decision that laid the groundwork for her accusatory letter and statements to police to be used as evidence in the trial. At a hearing this summer, it was determined the letter and statements to police should be allowed at trial. Jury selection begins Thursday; opening statements were scheduled for Monday.

COLD SETS IN AP

Photographer Bill Babcock walks the trails of Kensington Metropark west of Detroit looking for snow shots Tuesday Jan 1, 2008. A fast-moving, hard-hitting and record-breaking New Year's Day storm moved through southeastern Michigan early Tuesday, leaving more than a foot of snow in some areas and hazardous traveling on roads and freeways.

Asia

Britain to help probe Bhutto killing

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—President Pervez Musharraf announced Wednesday that Scotland Yard will help investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, reversing his initial rejection of foreign help after he came under pressure to allow a U.N. probe.

Authorities also pushed back parliamentary elections until Feb. 18—a six-week delay prompted by the rioting that followed the opposition leader's death. Opposition parties condemned the delay but still plan to take part in the elections, seen as a key step in bringing democracy to Pakistan after years of military rule.

Both developments could ease the turmoil that has gripped Pakistan since Bhutto's slaying in a gun and suicide bomb attack Thursday, which plunged the nation deeper into political crisis as it struggles to contain an explosion of Islamic militant violence.

The government declared just one day after the attack on Bhutto that an al-Qaida-linked militant orchestrated the killing and aired video footage. But the hasty accusation only served to cast doubt over the government's account of exactly how she died.

The government has also come under sharp criticism for its security arrangements for Bhutto, who had claimed elements in the ruling party were trying to kill her.

AP

Supporters of Pakistan's slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto chant slogans after burning effigies of country's President Pervez Musharraf and Pakistan Muslim League-Q party leader Chaudary Shujat Hussain during a protest rally against killing of their leader Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

In a nationally televised address Wednesday, a solemn-faced Musharraf said the death of Bhutto, a two-time prime minister, was a great tragedy for Pakistan. He blamed "terrorists" for her assassination and appealed for public unity to combat them.

"This is a time for reconciliation and not for confrontation," he said.

The government initially said it did not need foreign help to probe the killing. But then Musharraf sought assistance from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. His reversal could ease pressure for an independent, international investigation into both how she died and whether the government covered it up.

Scotland Yard said it was sending a small team of officers from the Metropolitan Police's Counterterrorism Command. British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the team would leave Britain by the end of the week.

The White House said it supported Scotland Yard's involvement, adding that a United Nations investigation into Bhutto's slaying was not necessary now.

"Scotland Yard being in the lead in this investigation is appropriate and necessary and I don't see—we don't see a need for an investigation beyond that at this time," presidential spokeswoman Dana Perino said.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack reiterated U.S. offers to assist in the inquiry. The White House would not comment on why Musharraf had rejected the U.S. offer to help.

"What's most important is that they proceed quickly and in a transparent and comprehensive way, so that the people of Pakistan can get the answers that they deserve, and that, as they move forward toward the elections with the date certain that was just set today, the people will be able to participate in a process freely," Perino said.

21 killed in Afghan bombings, fighting

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Roadside bombs and military operations in Afghanistan killed 21 people, including a coalition soldier and 14 Taliban fighters, officials said Wednesday.

A roadside bomb hit a U.S.-led coalition vehicle in eastern Khost province, killing a soldier and an Afghan interpreter, the coalition said. The soldier's nationality was not released, but a majority of the troops in the east are American. Two other soldiers were wounded.

Afghan and foreign troops killed eight suspected Taliban fighters Tuesday the Musa Qala area of southern Helmand province, the Defense Ministry said.

Afghanistan saw a record level of violence in 2007, with more than 6,500 people killed, according to an Associated Press count based on figures from Western and Afghan officials.

Helmand, the world's largest poppy-growing region, suffered some of the worst violence. British, U.S. and Afghan troops forced the Taliban to flee the town of Musa Qala last month. The militants had controlled the town and its surrounding areas for more than 10 months.

In Khost, a roadside bomb killed two Afghan security guards working for a U.S. military base, the Defense Ministry said.

Five other militants were killed in separate incidents when roadside bombs they were planting exploded prematurely, the ministry said. It also said Taliban militants killed an Afghan army officer and wounded another in Helmand's Sarkono area.

Police in Khost killed a would-be suicide bomber trying to enter a police checkpoint with hand grenades Tuesday, said Wazir Pacha, a spokesman for Khost's provincial police chief.

A roadside bomb in the south killed two border police in Kandahar province, said Gen. Abdul Razik.

Sri Lanka government ends cease-fire

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—The government decided Wednesday to withdraw from an internationally brokered cease-fire that had largely collapsed since the resurgence of fighting in Sri Lanka's civil war two years ago, an official said.

The Cabinet unanimously approved the prime minister's proposal to pull out from the 2002 truce, Media Minister Anura Yapa told The Associated Press.

The cease-fire, brokered by Norway, had been considered the best chance of ending two decades of civil war between the government and the Tamil Tiger rebels, who seek an independent homeland for ethnic Tamils in the north and east. But major fighting erupted again two years ago.

"Today it was proposed to the Cabinet by the honorable prime minister that the cease-fire is no longer valid and it's time to withdraw from the cease-fire agreement," Yapa said. "All the ministers agreed to the proposal."

Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake will soon notify Norway of the government's decision, Yapa said. Under the agreement, both sides must give 14 days notice before officially withdrawing from the truce.

ASIAN BRIEFS

China to switch to lethal injections

BEIJING (AP)—China, which executes more people each year than any other country, will expand the use of lethal injections instead of gunshots for death sentences, a state-run newspaper reported Thursday. Half of the country's 404 Intermediate People's Courts, which carry most executions, now use lethal injections, the China Daily quoted Jiang Xingchang, vice president of the Supreme People's Court, as saying. China does not officially release capital punishment figures, but it is believed to execute more people each year than the rest of the world combined. The human rights monitoring group Amnesty International says China executed at least 1,770 people in 2005 - about 80 percent of the world's total.

Myanmar regime imposes satellite TV fee

YANGON, Myanmar (AP)—Myanmar's military junta dramatically raised the annual fee for TV satellite dishes Wednesday, an apparent move to block the foreign news channels that beamed in global criticism of its recent crackdown on pro-democracy protests. The license fee has rocketed from $5 to $800—an unaffordable sum to most people in Myanmar. It is equivalent to about three times the annual salary of a public school teacher. The new fee was imposed without warning and discovered by residents who went to renew their licenses Wednesday. Most middle class homes and shops use satellite dishes to tune into foreign sports events, soap operas and to circumvent the junta's tightly controlled state media.

Winners in Bhutan vote include graduates

GAUHATI, India (AP)—The secluded Himalayan nation of Bhutan will begin its transformation from an absolute monarchy to a democracy with several leaders fresh out of college at the helm, election officials announced. Election officials announced late Tuesday the 15 members elected to the country's upper house in the first-ever national poll, held the day before. The winners included two women in their mid-20s, both recent college graduates, and a 27-year-old man whose first job since finishing school will be sitting in the upper house, officials said. King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, who will become the head of state later this year, is a 27-year-old Oxford graduate.

Report: Rich flout China child policy

BEIJING (AP)—A growing number of rich and powerful people in central China are brazenly flouting the country's one-child policy, a newspaper said Wednesday. The violations in Hubei province are leaving local family planning officials powerless, the Beijing Morning Post reported. Even when fined by authorities, many rich that have openly ignored the rules are slow to provide the money, the newspaper said. In one case, a person was fined $106,000 for having a second child, the highest amount ever in Hubei, but has only paid $14,000, the paper said. The report said 1,678 people, including government officials, were punished in 2007 for not adhering to the policy, which has been in place for almost 30 years. There were no details about the punishments.

Malaysian minister resigns over sex tape

KUALALUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysia's health minister resigned Wednesday after acknowledging that he and a female friend were the couple in a secretly filmed sex video.

A one-hour DVD recording circulated anonymously last week showed Health Minister Chua Soi Lek, a married man with three children, performing sexual acts with the woman in a hotel room.

Chua, 61, acknowledged Tuesday he was the man in the video, and described the woman as a "personal friend." He refused to elaborate.

The former physician has risen fast in the government in recent years, but the scandal turned into a high-profile embarrassment for Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who brought Chua into the Cabinet in 2004.

Chua said he was resigning immediately as health minister, a member of Parliament and vice president of the Malaysian Chinese Association, the No. 2 party in Abdullah's ruling coalition.

On Tuesday, he had said he would not quit his Cabinet post despite concerns that the scandal would provide political ammunition for opposition groups, which often raise allegations of government immorality and misconduct.

Chua told reporters Wednesday he felt the need to take responsibility for his actions.

"I think that anyone who is a leader has to be responsible for his mistakes or weaknesses," Chua said. "I feel proud at least I dared to admit. I never said that it was not me (in the DVD). I never even said that it was doctored."

But he said that he had discovered that people "could not accept" his public apology.

World

300 dead in Kenya election violence

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—Kenya's opposition leader vowed to go ahead with a "million man" protest rally Thursday that many fear could worsen a wave of political and ethnic violence which humanitarian groups say has already killed 300 people and displaced 100,000.

Though much of Nairobi was quiet Wednesday, shots rang out in the city's sprawling Mathare slum, where police escorted terrified families to safety as fire raged through shacks.

"All you do here is come to pick up bodies," Boniface Shikami, a bystander, shouted at police.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga claims President Mwai Kibaki's re-election in the Dec. 27 vote was a sham, and his massive rally in Nairobi could bring hundreds of thousands of supporters and their rivals onto the streets of the capital.

The government has banned the march, setting the stage for clashes between security forces and Odinga's supporters.

Odinga told The Associated Press on Wednesday his peaceful rally was meant "to communicate to our people, to inform them where we are coming from, where we are and where we want to go."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke by telephone Wednesday with Odinga and had a call scheduled with Kibaki to ask the pair to resolve their differences peacefully, the State Department said.

Spokesman Sean McCormack declined to say whether the United States recognized Kibaki's victory as legitimate but said Washington had "concerns" about accusations of electoral malfeasance that must be addressed within the country's legal system.

Though both sides say they are ready to talk, the Odinga and Kibaki camps have mostly traded accusations the other is fueling ethnic violence.

Odinga says he will not meet with Kibaki unless he concedes he lost the presidency, something Kibaki is unlikely to do.

2007 good year for air safety

GENEVA (AP)—Aviation is becoming safer every year and 2007 saw the lowest number of crashes in 44 years, an independent watchdog group said Wednesday.

But the Geneva-based Aircraft Crashes Record Office said some countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, and Colombia, were slower to improve airline safety.

There were 136 serious accidents in 2007, the fewest since 1963, ACRO said. It said 965 people died in crashes last year—a 25 percent drop from the previous year.

Most crashes involved small, propeller-powered planes, ACRO said. Larger jets accounted for only a quarter of accidents, but carried the highest fatality figures because of the greater number of passengers.

Preliminary estimates by the International Air Transport Association showed air travel increased by more than 3 percent in 2007 to about 2.2 billion passengers.

While industry experts differ on just how safe last year was—it depends on what is classified as a serious accident—they agree that the overall trend in airline safety is good.

"We're operating at such a high level of safety that even one or two accidents can skew the numbers tremendously," IATA spokesman Anthony Concil told The Associated Press.

The July 17 crash in Brazil of a Tam Linhas Aereas SA jetliner, which slammed into a building in Sao Paulo and killed 199 people was the worst single accident of 2007.

Europe, which had no major accidents in 2007, and North America, where the figure of 34 accidents is relatively low compared to the large number of flights, are leading the way on safety, said Concil.

According to a tally of incidents listed on the Aircraft Crashes Record Office Web site, the number of people killed in airline accidents in the United States dropped from 75 in 2006 to 66 last year.

If systems on the ground in the U.S. were brought to the same level as those in modern planes, then it would even be possible to have more takeoffs and landings from the same airports without endangering safety, Concil said.

WORLD BRIEFS

Admissions of Iraqi refugees lagging

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. admissions of Iraqi refugees are nose-diving amid bureaucratic in-fighting despite the Bush administration's pledge to boost them to roughly 1,000 per month, according to State Department statistics obtained by The Associated Press. For the third straight month since the United States said it would improve processing and resettle 12,000 Iraqis by the end of the current budget year on Sept. 30., the number admitted has actually slid, the figures show. The steady decline—from 450 in October to 362 in November and 245 in December—means the administration will have to allow in 10,943 Iraqis over the next nine months, or roughly 1,215 per month, to meet the target it has set for itself.

Hezbollah wants veto power in government

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP)—No president will be elected in Lebanon unless the Hezbollah-led opposition gets veto power in the future government, the leader of the militant group declared Wednesday. Sheik Hassan Nasrallah accused the anti-Syrian parliamentary majority of creating the current presidential deadlock by refusing a partnership with the Syrian-backed opposition. A parliamentary session to elect Lebanon's president was postponed for the 11th time on Dec. 28 with feuding factions deadlocked over a constitutional amendment and the shape of a future government. A new parliament session has been set for Jan. 12.

Iran's Ayatollah: No smear campaigning

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Iran's top leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Wednesday for clean campaigning during March parliament elections, urging candidates and their supporters to abstain from smearing rivals' reputations. "Discrediting and damaging the reputation of individuals in the press, Internet web sites and other means is not correct at all, and is not advisable," Khamenei said on state television. "I strongly request and insist that the sympathizers only propagate and support their favorite candidates and seriously avoid such damaging methods." The call by Khamenei, who was addressing a large crowd in the provincial capital of Yazd in central Iran, comes amid stepped up criticism of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by both moderate conservatives and reformists ahead of the crucial vote.

Vatican, Muslims plan 'historic' meeting

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Catholic and Muslim representatives plan to meet in Rome in the spring to start a "historic" dialogue between the faiths after relations were soured by Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 comments about Islam and holy war, Vatican officials said. Benedict proposed the encounter as part of his official response to an open letter sent to him and other Christian leaders in October by 138 Muslim scholars from around the world. The letter urged Christians and Muslims to develop their common ground of belief in one God. Three representatives of the Muslim scholars will come to Rome in February or March to prepare for the meeting, the head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, told the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano this weekend.

Israel kills 7 Gaza militants

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—Israeli forces killed seven Palestinian militants in a clash before dawn Wednesday, pressing its war against armed groups in the Gaza Strip days before President Bush arrives to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Bush has no plans to visit Gaza, which is controlled by the Islamic militant group Hamas. But persistent violence in the area could overshadow his visit, his first to the region as president.

The visit is part of Bush's intense efforts to get Israel and the Palestinians to sign a peace agreement by the time he leaves office in January 2009.

Bush is expected to meet jointly with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian officials said on condition of anonymity due to the diplomatic nature of the matter. Olmert's office would not confirm the news.

Israel is pursuing peace with Abbas' Western-backed government, which rules from the West Bank and is locked in a power struggle against Gaza's Hamas rulers. Hamas, which seized control of Gaza last June after routing Abbas' forces there, opposes the peace talks.

While embracing Abbas, Israel frequently conducts military operations against militants in Gaza in response to frequent rocket attacks launched from the area.

In Wednesday's violence, Israeli troops killed seven militants, including at least three Hamas members, in an operation east of Gaza City, Hamas and Palestinian medical officials said. Five gunmen were wounded, Hamas said. The body of the seventh militant, killed overnight, was turned over to Palestinian medics by Israel. The military said he was killed while trying to infiltrate into Israel.

The Israeli army confirmed that ground troops and Israeli aircraft fired at gunmen who had shot anti-tank missiles toward the soldiers. Israel has killed dozens of militants in similar pinpoint operations in recent weeks.

Hamas vowed revenge. "This is part of the ongoing conspiracy against the resistance. Resistance is not going to stop," said Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan.

Abbas spokesman Nabil Abu Rdeneh denounced the Israeli raid as an "aggressive act that aims to escalate the situation prior to the visit of President Bush, to try to impose a security agenda on the visit and evade implementing political commitments."

AP

Palestinians carry the bodies of killed Hamas militants during their funeral in Gaza City, Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008.

Palestinian pilgrims return to Gaza

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP)—Egypt allowed more than 2,000 Palestinian pilgrims to enter the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, drawing a fierce rebuke from Israel, which had tried to prevent top members of the militant Hamas from returning home.

Egypt's decision to open its border deepened a crisis in relations with Israel, which has accused Cairo of not doing enough to stop Palestinian smuggling of weapons and contraband into Gaza through tunnels under the border.

Israeli security officials said they expressed their outrage to Egypt, accusing the country of reneging on recent pledges to keep the border sealed.

The Muslim pilgrims left Gaza last month to make a hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. They became trapped in Egypt on Saturday when the Egyptian government—apparently at Israel's request—said they would have to cross through Israel, instead of going directly into Gaza through Rafah.

At least 10 senior Hamas members, including former deputy Parliament speaker Ahmed Bahar, were among the returning pilgrims. Israel was concerned they were carrying large sums of money for Gaza's Hamas rulers, who have been under an Israeli blockade since seizing the territory from their Fatah rivals in June. Israel considers the Islamic militant Hamas, which is committed to its destruction, a terrorist group.

The pilgrims refused to enter Israel and staged violent protests, setting fire to the desert camps where they were held.

The standoff was sensitive for the Egyptian government, which is deeply worried about being seen in the Arab world as worsening Palestinians' hardship in Gaza. Israel has sealed Gaza since the Hamas takeover, deepening economic hardship in an already impoverished area.

Off the Wall

Fast-food worker returns $185,000 check

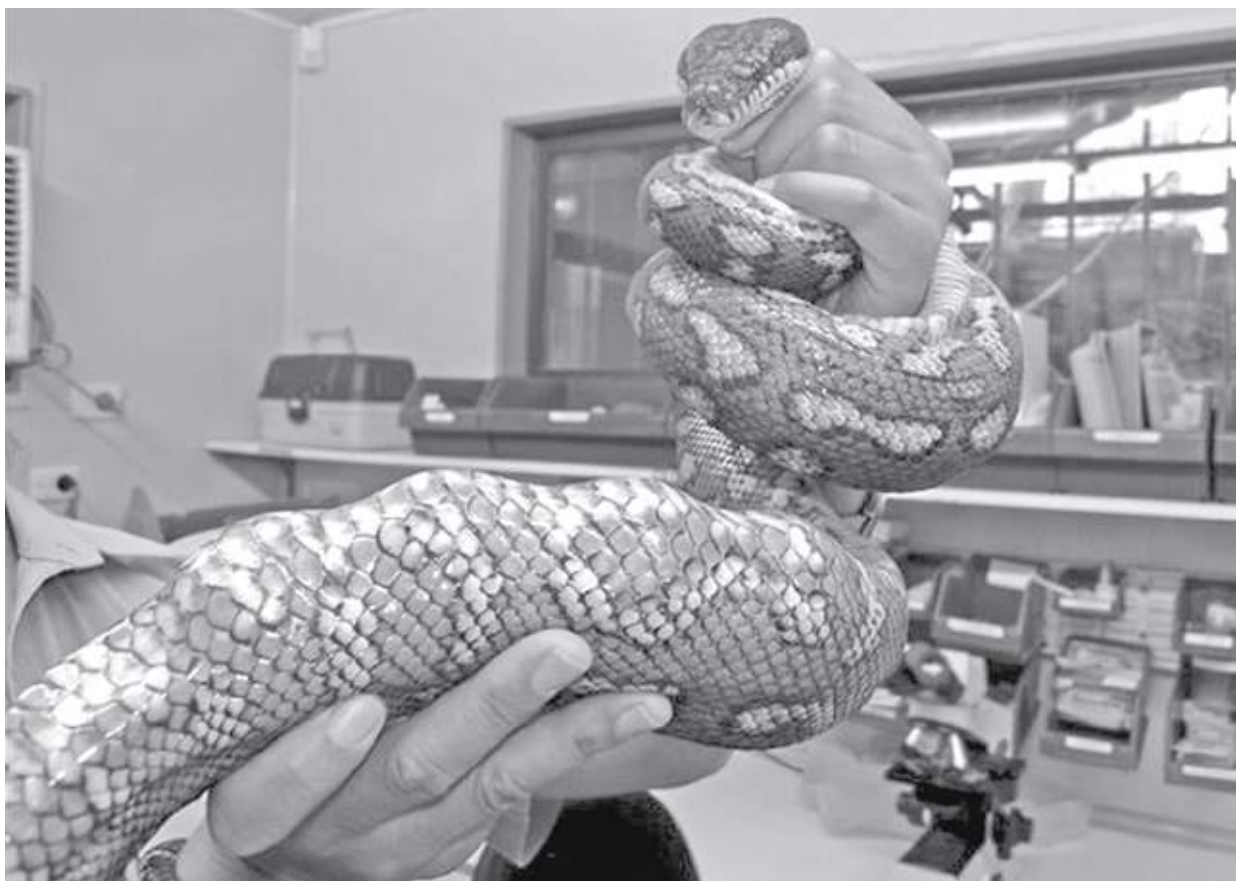
NORWICH, Conn. (AP)—Reggie Damone just wanted to jot down a phone number when he picked up what he thought was litter on a sidewalk this week. But what he found was an envelope containing a $185,000 check.

Damone, who receives food stamps and works at McDonald's, said he didn't think twice about trying to cash it. Instead, the 47-year-old took a bus Monday from his Jewett City home to a bank and returned the check to the niece of the landlord to whom the check was written.

She thanked Damone with a $50 bill.

Damone said that although he knew $185,000 could pay his rent and other bills for a long time, he was never tempted to try to cash it and splurge.

He says he remembered his mother's words: If you take something, you lose three times that amount—and if you do something good, something good comes back to you.



AP

In this undated photo released by the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary on Thursday, Jan. 3 2008, a keeper holds a carpet python snake that swallowed four golf balls after mistaking them for chicken eggs at Currumbin on Australia's Gold Coast.

Snake saved after eating golf balls

BRISBANE, Australia (AP)—A snake has been saved by surgery after mistaking four golf balls for a meal of chicken eggs, a veterinarian said Wednesday. A couple had placed the balls in their chicken coop at Nobbys Creek in New South Wales state to encourage their hen to nest, Australian Associated Press reported.

They found the balls missing last month and a lumpy carpet python nearby. They took the 32-inch non-venomous snake to the nearby Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, where senior veterinarian Michael Pyne operated to remove the balls from the snake's intestine.

Pyne said Wednesday the snake was making a speedy recovery.

"Those golf balls weren't moving any further; they were stuck where they were," Pyne said.

"If it hadn't been found, it would have died for sure," he added.

'Hearty eater' says buffet banned him

HOUMA, La. (AP)—A 6-foot-3, 265-pound man says a restaurant overcharged him for his trips to the buffet line, then banned him and a relative because they're hearty eaters. A spokesman for the restaurant denies the claim.

Ricky Labit, a disabled offshore worker, said he had been a regular for eight months at the Manchuria Restaurant in Houma, eating there as often as three times a week.

On his most recent visit, he said, a waitress gave him and his wife's cousin, 44-year-old Michael Borrelli, a bill for $46.40, roughly double the buffet price for two adults.

"She says, 'Y'all fat, and y'all eat too much,'" Labit said.

Labit and Borrelli said they felt discriminated against because of their size. "I was stunned, that somebody would say something like that. I ain't that fat, I only weigh 277," Borrelli said, adding that a waitress told him he looked like he a had a "baby in the belly."

Houma accountant Thomas Campo said the men were charged an extra $10 each on Dec. 21 because they made a habit of dining exclusively on the more expensive seafood dishes, including crab legs and frog legs.

"We have a lot of big people there," said Campo, who spoke for owner Li Shang, whose English is limited. "We don't discriminate."

Labit denied ever being told he would be asked to pay more than the standard adult price.

The argument grew heated, and police were called.

The police report states, "The incident was settled when the management advised that the bill was a mistake and, to appease Ricky, the meal was complimentary."

Labit said he insisted on paying but was told not to come back. He complained that when seafood on the buffet line runs out, the restaurant only grudgingly cooks more.

Campo said the proprietress tries to reduce waste of quality food, he said.

Attorney installs shark tank in office

BOZEMAN, Mont. (AP)—It started out as a joke—a lawyer putting a shark tank in his office. "I said, 'What would it take to put a shark in a lawyer's office?'", and it kind of took off from there, said attorney Christopher Gillette.

On Monday, a crane hoisted a 1,000-gallon aquarium up to a second-story window in Gillette's new office.

"I can't watch," Gillette said as half a dozen workers guided the roughly 8-foot-long, 4-foot-wide and 4-foot-tall tank through the window.

Gillette plans to fill the saltwater tank with a miniature marine ecosystem, including at least two sharks—a blacktip reef shark being flown in from the Caribbean Sea and a bamboo shark that will be hatched from eggs in the tank.

To support the tank's weight, engineers and architects reinforced the floor joists and created other structural supports. When completed, the tank and stand will weigh around eight tons.

Gillette is purchasing the tank from Crystal Clear Aquariums, a Bozeman company that installs and maintains salt water aquariums.

Tanner Young, company owner, said he will spend up to a month readying the tank for the fish. The tank will be hooked up to a computer monitoring system that can automatically notify Young of changes in water quality or other problems.

Wedding gown gets a second chance

NEWARK, N.J. (AP)—A wedding gown, bought in joy and then abandoned in despair after a breakup nearly 15 years ago, finally got its walk down the aisle. And it was worn by the woman who had chosen it in 1993. The improbable became reality when Gina Mignone married her love of seven years, Art Smith, on Saturday in Garfield.

Wearing the dress was possible because the gown was saved by dress shop owner Maria DiCarlo.

"I knew you'd be back for it," DiCarlo told Mignone, according to Monday's editions of The Star-Ledger of Newark.

DiCarlo, whose Hollywood Bridal Fashions is in Union, remembered Mignone calling her in tears when her fiance broke their engagement three months before the wedding.

Mignone had paid for the $1,900 Cinderella gown, but never came in for the final fitting.

Over the years, DiCarlo told the newspaper, she had given away hundreds of dresses, including gowns for weddings that were scrapped. But not Mignone's.

DiCarlo had stuffed the bow and the sleeves with paper so they would hold their shape, and wrapped the gown in plastic. She left it hanging in a corner of her basement storeroom.

When Mignone, a vice principal at the Burnet Street School in Newark, finally returned to the shop, she still liked the dress. And the dress was still too tight.

Mignone had ordered it two sizes small, figuring she would drop some weight before her wedding.

DiCarlo said she could add a panel in the back so the zipper would close.

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Woman in burning truck keeps driving

PAW PAW TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP)—Having live electrical wires fall on her truck and set it on fire wasn't enough to slow a motorist in southwest Michigan. State police say the unnamed woman ran a stop sign Monday night in Van Buren County's Paw Paw Township and hit a cable supporting a utility pole. The pole came down and the wires fell onto the truck, but the woman backed onto the roadway and resumed driving. Trooper Rick Carlson said the driver kept going until flames engulfed the truck and she had to jump out. An ambulance caught up to her and took her to a Kalamazoo hospital for burns to her hands and head. Her injuries weren't life-threatening. Carlson says the woman's dog, a pug, also was burned but survived.

Boy, 12, reels in 551-pound bull shark

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)—A 12-year-old Connecticut boy may be the new Florida state record holder for catching the heaviest bull shark. Aidan Murray Medley had a spent a half day at sea Tuesday when he reeled in the 551-pound bull shark just north of the Palm Beach Inlet. The seventh-grader at Eagle Hill School in Greenwich was in Palm Beach County on vacation with his family. They plan to submit his catch for a new state record. Florida wildlife officials say the current record set in 1981 was a 517-pound catch at Panama City Beach.

Pair ring in '08 at maternity ward again

GETTYSBURG, Pa. (AP)—A central Pennsylvania couple has a new tradition for ringing in the new year: spending it in the maternity ward. For the second year in a row, Kyle and Becky Armstrong welcomed the first baby of the year at Gettysburg Hospital. Faith Lynn Armstrong arrived on New Year's Day at 5:23 a.m. Her brother, Kaden Skye, was the hospital's first baby in 2007—also born on Jan. 1. Nurse manager Laura Swomley said she'd never seen anything like it in 25 years at the hospital. "It's strange," agreed Becky Armstrong, of Gettysburg. "It's all very weird." Armstrong said it wasn't anything she and her husband had planned. "Faith being a first baby was not on my mind," said Armstrong. "It didn't matter to me."

Man puts out fire with aunt's XL undies

LONDON (AP)—From baggy briefs to the ultimate hotpants: A British woman's underwear saved the day by doubling as an emergency fire blanket when her kitchen caught fire. John Marsey and his cousin Darren Lines were frying bread in Jenny Marsey's kitchen in Hartlepool, northeast England, on Sunday when their meal caught fire. Lines grabbed the nearest thing from a pile of laundry to put it out: his aunt's billowing, powder blue, size XL underpants. He ran them under the faucet and tossed them onto the flames, successfully smothering the fire, a spokesman for the Cleveland Fire Brigade said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with department policy. Lines' swift thinking saved the kitchen—but left his aunt's underwear slightly scorched. "It could have been a lot worse," she said. "My family could have been in hospital but the knickers saved the day. I'm just grateful to the boys." The fire official said the general principle of using a large, wet cloth to cover a grease fire was a sound one. As for using underwear: "Clearly it depends on what size you are—but I don't want to go there."

Science & Technology

Got a manuscript? Publishing now a snap

NEW YORK (AP)—Getting a book published isn't the rarefied literary feat it once was.

New printing technologies are making published authors of legions of aspiring writers, a population that once toiled for years on tomes that might not see the light of day.

The vast majority of today's instant authors may sell only a few dozen copies of their books, but on-demand publishing is letting thousands realize the ambitions of generations of would-be writers.

On-demand publisher Lulu.com has churned out 236,000 paperbacks since it opened in 2002, and its volume of new paperbacks has risen each month this year, hitting 14,745 in November. Retail giant Amazon.com got into the game this summer, offering on-demand publishing through its CreateSpace, which was already letting filmmakers and musicians burn DVDs and CDs.

The programs are easy for just about anyone to use: Authors select basic options, including the book's size, binding style and paperback or hardcover. After the manuscript is uploaded, users go to a page where they select a font and design the book's cover. Even after a book has been printed they can fix typos for later printings.

Unlike vanity publishing, in which aspiring authors pay to have their books run on traditional presses, on-demand publishing doesn't have to cost writers a cent.

Giving authors what they want

Pricing and sales information for three online self-publishing services:

Publisher	Cost to publish	Publisher share of revenue*
CreateSpace (subsidiary of Amazon.com)	$3.15 per book plus 2 cents per black-and-white page and 12 cents per color page	Base cost plus 20 percent of additional revenue from sales on author's site (30 percent on Amazon.com)
Lulu.com	$4.53 per book (paperback) plus 2 cents per black-and-white page and 15 cents per color page	Base cost plus 20 percent of additional revenue
Blurb.com	$12.95 (paperback 20-40 pages); $22.95 (hardcover 20-40 pages); pricing goes up in 40-page increments (maximum 440 pages)	Base cost, author keeps additional revenue

*Retail price set by author

SOURCES: The companies AP

Publishers produce books only after they're ordered and paid for, which eliminates overruns and the need for warehousing. They charge for printing, or take a cut of sales, and they set up payment systems, online bookstores and Web marketing tools.

Some authors publish on-demand books in hopes of catching the eye of a major publisher. But not all writers who use on-demand publishers aspire to write the great American novel.

The system also allows small businesses to print high-end brochures, screenwriters to shop their scripts around and others to assemble wedding and other special-event books for friends and family.

"I'm just amazed I have the book in my hand," said Catherine Dyer, a 49-year-old Atlanta resident who co-authored a cookbook with her four sisters through Lulu.com. "I knew trying to get a traditional publisher would take ages. With this, I knew at the onset I could have a book in my hand."

"You Want Me To Bring a Dish?"—the sisters' 104-page cookbook—sells for $22.76. They've ordered about 100 copies to stock stores around Atlanta and are promoting the book through local signings and radio appearances.

Dyer's already brainstorming ideas for a spinoff.

"Cause I know I can get it published," she said.

The challenge for authors now is getting the word out about their work.

"It's all about the marketing and distribution. We realized early on that that was the bigger challenge," said Eileen Gittins, founder and CEO of Blurb.com, an on-demand publisher with 11,000 available self-published titles.

To help authors, Blurb automatically creates widgets that can be dragged and dropped onto other Web sites.

What makes self-publishing viable is the Internet, which gives writers instant access to audiences that share their same interests, no matter how obscure. Authors also use online communities such as blogs, MySpace.com and others to market their works.

"It used to be, if you created a book about an obscure topic, your audience was limited. Now maybe you're part of an online gardening community, and you already have an audience of 5,000 who care deeply about roses," Gittins said.

For most aspiring authors, a book deal with a major publishing house remains the ultimate dream, however.

Big companies like Random House Inc. or HarperCollins Publishers can promote authors on a national scale and get titles in major bookstores. Professional editors also polish copy in the traditional publishing world, a step that can transform a manuscript into a bestseller or perhaps a masterpiece.

"The value and cachet of being with a larger house is still something authors value," said Tina Jordan, vice president of the Association of American Publishers.

Users of Amazon.com's CreateSpace are listed the same way as literary giants online. Keyword searches will pull up self-published books along with those of Grisham, Shakespeare, Hemingway or Rowling.

The writers are willing to live with drawbacks that would drive a purist crazy. Printing quality can vary, with images possibly emerging denser or brighter in some copies. Some in the industry say the quality of on-demand publishing has improved greatly and few would be able to distinguish the difference from those printed on traditional presses. And on-demand books are priced according to their length, making them pricier than books printed en masse.

But Gittins said shoppers are willing to pay a little more for a book tailored to a specific audience.

"It's really an opportunity for people to get their creative content out there to millions of people," said Stacey Hurwitz, spokeswoman for CreateSpace.

A future of robots and nano fabrics

By JOEL GARREAU

(C) 2007, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—The gift gizmos that brightened the holidays this year—the telephone that is mostly screen, the tiny music player—were unimaginable not long ago.

So, as the New Year approaches, we wonder what our objects of desire will be in a year or five. For answers, we turn to Paul Saffo, a veteran Silicon Valley forecaster who explores long-term technological change and its practical impact on business and society.

Saffo and his interlocutor know each other as members of the scenario-planning organization Global Business Network. In scenarios, a 20-year horizon is common. Five years is almost painfully short-range thinking. So Saffo does not focus here on astonishments likely to emerge from the research pipeline, like prescription memory drugs. Instead, he concentrates on things that actually exist commercially today but have yet to explode into our consciousness. He looks for things that await the magic moment when mere technology is transformed into objects of raving desire.

Q: What do we not know we want yet, that we're going to find out we do want in the next five years?

A: It's robots. Very simple, very clear. In the '80s we created our computers. In the '90s we connected them together. In this decade we've been hanging sensors on them—eyes, ears. All they need are wheels and they become robots. It is increasingly affordable.

Q: So "The Jetsons" was right?

A: You mean Rosie the Robot? Not quite. We have the technology. The thing missing is the big idea.

We want to confer life and intelligence on everything. We want to see fairies under trees. We want to believe that rocks can talk. And that's why we are just delighted when our electronics act in a lifelike form.

For teenage boys, I guarantee you within five years the it Christmas gift, the thing everybody is going to want, is going to be a telerobotic UAV (unmanned air vehicle). Today's radio-controlled fliers are hard to use because you have to learn how to fly them. But when your helicopter is a robot, it flies itself and you just tell it where to go—no learning curve, just instant gratification. Imagine a flying bot that costs $200 or less, is the size of a paperback book, and teenage boys can _

Q: Terrorize their sisters?

A: Terrorize their sisters or look at the sunbathers in the pool next door.

Q: Can you see our cars becoming robots?

A: You can push a button now and they park themselves. We're going to keep piling more smarts into automotive telematics. The robots increasingly will advise you. Then there will be a tipping point—the insurance company is going to require the robot drives.

Q: When do we start falling in love with the intelligent entity on board?

A: Some guy's got a book and says everyone is going to have sex with robots in the near future.

Saffo

Q: But they don't actually exist yet, do they?

A: I—I haven't really looked into it.

Q: What's the point of living in California if you don't ?

A: I know. It's hard to keep up with these things.

But let's pick the low-hanging fruit here. The double-knit-suit thing of the next five years is nano finishes on fabrics.

(Nanotechnology involves the manipulation of objects as small as molecules.)

Q: You think they're actually going to take off?

A: Clothes that don't stain, that you can spill a glass of red wine on and laugh at—I think that's going to catch on a lot more. We have nano fabrics today but nobody's done anything really fun with them yet.

Q: Wait a minute. If they don't get stained, does this mean that geeks are going to wear them for like four months straight without washing them?

A: This is what's terrifying. You know the fabrics with the embedded nano silver? A couple of athletic gear companies have these fabrics—the embedded silver kills the bacteria that makes them smell.

Q: So these shirts will never be washed.

A: Every new thing comes with a hidden curse. It was Heraclitus who told us that.

Another place where nano stuff comes in is new kinds of fabrics with wildly new finishes. Things that look like chatoyant rainbows. You know the kind of rock called tiger's-eye? How it kind of shimmers when you look at it? That is the quality of chatoyant. Having really interesting surfaces. Having fabrics that the artwork changes on them.

Q: Robots, nano fabrics. OK, what else we got?

A: Phones are fashion.

Q: Is that going to produce a want?

A: The want has already happened and people just don't realize it. You no longer replace your old phone with your new phone because the old phone is broken. You replace it because you're bored with the finish.

Q: What's so complicated about enamel?

A: It's not enamel. It's the highest of high tech. What we're going toward is phones that have chameleon finishes, that have active surfaces that change shape and color. You know, mood phones.

Q: And we are going to want chameleon phones?

A: We're just going to want something new. Whether it's a chameleon phone that changes its colors based on the conversation going around it, or the music that's playing on it, or it becomes all screen, it's not the specific thing we want. What we just want is something new.

So phones become hyperfashion. Electronics are fashion. The same thing with finishes on cars. Electrochromic stuff where you can actually change the color of the car. Very popular with thieves.

Q: What about our social lives and connecting up to people? Social networking? Are there going to be any big new wants?

A: The big thing that will be in fashion is being disconnected. Seriously. When being connected is hard or takes a fancy device, being connected is hip. When pagers first came out, if you had a pager it meant you were a cardiac surgeon or an arms control negotiator. Now it means you're a maid at the Hyatt.

So, when connectivity becomes as easy as it is, the hip thing is to be unconnected. It will cost money. We will depend on sort of an electronic concierge that's vigilantly watching our phone calls and e-mail, mediating between you and the rest of the world.

Q: What about energy, climate change, going green? Anything in that?

A: In an age when pessimism is the new black, solar cells are hip. It's the perfect badge of social consciousness. Solar cells on your house are evidence of virtue, and the price is coming down fast enough. It's home fashion.

Q: This is going to be bigger than granite countertops?

A: Maybe not quite. This all has to get down to the cost of a car. Right now it's about the cost of three cars.

Q: When does want-to-have turn into need-to-have?

A: Wants turn into needs when your neighbor gets it. That's what happened with TVs. People wanted TVs. But the moment the neighbor had it and your kids came home saying, "Daddy, Daddy, why don't we have a TV?"—that's when it becomes a need.

AP

An apartment building in Avenhorn, northern Netherlands, Friday, Dec. 14, 2007. The 70-unit building is partly heated by solar energy collected from pipes under the asphalt of a 200-meter (yard) road and a small parking lot. Inset shows a model of a latticework of flexible plastic pipes, held firmly in place by a plastic grid, covered over by asphalt, which magnifies the sun's thermal power. The pipe-work by Dutch civil engineering firm Ooms, is claimed to be capable of siphoning the warmth from roads and parking lots to heat homes and offices.

New energy uses for asphalt

SCHARWOUDE, Netherlands (AP)—If you've ever blistered your bare feet on a hot road you know that asphalt absorbs the sun's energy. A Dutch company is now siphoning heat from roads and parking lots to heat homes and offices.

As climate change rises on the international agenda, the system built by the civil engineering firm, Ooms Avenhorn Holding BV, doesn't look as wacky as it might have 10 years ago when first conceived.

Solar energy collected from a 200-yard stretch of road and a small parking lot helps heat a 70-unit four-story apartment building in the northern village of Avenhorn. An industrial park of some 160,000 square feet in the nearby city of Hoorn is kept warm in winter with the help of heat stored during the summer from 36,000 square feet of pavement. The runways of a Dutch air force base in the south supply heat for its hangar.

And all that under normally cloudy Dutch skies, with only a few days a year of truly sweltering temperatures.

The Road Energy System is one of the more unusual ways scientists and engineers are trying to harness the power of the sun, the single most plentiful, reliable, accessible and inexhaustible source of renewable energy—radiating to earth more watts in one hour than the world can use in a whole year.

But today, solar power provides just 0.04 percent of global energy, held back by high production costs and low efficiency rates.

Solar advocates say that will change within a few years.

Other renewable sources have drawbacks: Not every place is breezy enough for wind turbines; waves and tides are good only for coastal regions; hydroelectricity requires rivers and increasingly objectionable dams; biofuels take up land once used solely for food crops.

"But solar falls everywhere," says Patrick Mazza, of Climate Solutions, a consultancy group in Seattle, Wash.

Compared with other energy sources, "solar comes out as the one with the real heavy lift. It's the one we really need to get at," he said.

Ooms' thermal energy system is actually a spin-off from attempts to reduce road maintenance and costs.

A latticework of flexible pipes, held in place by a grid, is covered over by asphalt, which magnifies the sun's thermal power. As water in the pipes is heated, it is pumped deep under the ground to natural aquifers where it maintains a fairly constant temperature of about 68 F. The heated water can be retrieved months later to keep the road surface ice-free in winter.

Though it doubles the cost of construction, the system is designed to provide longer life for roads and bridges, fewer ice-induced accidents and less need to repave worn surfaces.

But the same system can pump cold water from a separate subterranean reservoir to cool buildings on hot days.

"We found we were gathering more energy in summer than we needed, so we asked a building contractor what we can do with the extra energy," said Lex Van Zaane, the commercial manager. The answer was to construct buildings near the tarmac and pipe hot water under the floor.

The water usually isn't hot enough on its own, and must go through an electricity-powered heat pump for an extra boost, Van Zaane said. The installation cost is about twice as much as normal gas heating, but the energy required is about half of what would otherwise be needed. That translates into lower monthly heating bills and a 50 percent savings in carbon emissions.

Rooftop solar water heaters have been standard in some countries for decades. In 1954 Bell Labs created the first photovoltaic cells, which use sunlight to create electric current.

But it is only in the last decade that researchers have begun raising the efficiency of photovoltaic cells to economically generate electricity, and new technologies aim to make them commercially competitive without subsidies from taxpayers.

Experimental technologies involve new methods to concentrate the sun's energy by using mirrors or lenses, or devices that track the sun's path across the sky. New materials are being developed to make better cells. And scientists are working with electrochemical cells using a liquid rather than a solid component to absorb light.

"The prospect of relying on the sun for all our power demands is finally becoming realistic," says report in New Scientist.

Video game looks into world of wolves

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—The new video game "WolfQuest" allows players to follow the call of the wild in the role of a wolf in Yellowstone National Park.

Players learn quickly, with help from realistic graphics, that wolves do a lot of running—across plains, through forests and up and down steep slopes.

"You have to learn how to hunt, survive, defend your territory and ultimately find a mate and establish your own pack," said project director Grant Spickelmier, assistant education director at Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley.

The first episode, "Amethyst Mountain," was officially released Dec. 20 as a free download at http://www.wolfquest.org . Spickelmier said the game had been downloaded 13,500 times by Wednesday.

The Minnesota Zoo developed "WolfQuest" with Eduweb, an educational software developer in St. Paul, on a $508,253 National Science Foundation grant. Other partners include the National Zoo in Washington, the Phoenix Zoo, Yellowstone and the International Wolf Center in Ely.

The game is aimed at ages 10 to 15 because kids that age have largely stopped going to zoos and are more interested in things like video games, Spickelmier said.

"We're hoping to capture some of those kids back with this game," he said, adding that the Minnesota Zoo also hopes to interest kids in wolf conservation and biology.

Eleven-year-old Riley Breckheimer, of Apple Valley, tried out "WolfQuest" at its launch party at the zoo and declared it "pretty cool." He said he took down one snowshoe hare and got an elk about halfway down. The game also gave him new respect for wolves.

"They can run over miles and miles of area just to get to one elk to get something to eat," he said. "It's not like humans where humans have to go just a few blocks to the grocery store."

It's not the first time a zoo has offered computer games. The San Diego Zoo, National and the New York Zoos and Aquarium have games for younger kids on their Web sites. Nor is it the first time a video game has simulated wolf life: the DOS game "Wolf" was released in 1994.

But Steve Feldman, spokesman for the American Zoo Association, said "WolfQuest" takes things to a higher level.

"The level of realism, and also the goal, which is to effect real conservation behavior change, is what make this game unique," Feldman said.

In the first episode, as a solitary wolf roaming Amethyst Mountain in Yellowstone, players chase down elk and hares, relying on their eyes and sense of smell. When the "scent vision" screen toggles on, the background goes black and white and scent trails light up. The screen also shows how old the trails are.

To howl like a wolf, players just hit the "H" key, which in future episodes will help draw in their pack.

"WolfQuest" can be played alone or with up to five players online, where players also can connect and share tips. Additional episodes due in 2008 will explore other areas of Yellowstone and allow players to establish territory (yes, by lifting a leg) and defend their elk carcasses against hungry grizzly bears, raise pups and even kill sheep on nearby ranches.

US near bottom of global privacy index

LONDON (AP)—Individual privacy is under threat around the world as governments continue introducing surveillance and information-gathering measures, according to an international rights group.

"The general trend is that privacy is being extinguished in country after country," said Simon Davies, director of London-based Privacy International, which released a study on the issue Saturday. "Even those countries where we expected ongoing strong privacy protection, like Germany and Canada, are sinking into the mire.

Although privacy was improving in the former communist states of eastern Europe, it is worsening across Western Europe, the report said. Concerns about terrorism, immigration and border security were driving the spread of identity and fingerprinting systems, according to the report.

Greece, Romania and Canada had the best records of 47 countries Privacy International surveyed.

Malaysia, Russia and China ranked worst, but Great Britain and the United States also fell into the lowest-performing group of "endemic surveillance societies."

The survey considered such factors as legal protections, enforcement, data sharing, the use of biometrics and prevalence of closed-circuit cameras.

U.S. President George W. Bush's administration has come under fire for monitoring—without warrants—international phone calls and e-mails involving people suspected of having terrorist links.

Davies said little had changed since Democrats took control of Congress a year ago.

Britain was criticized for its plans for national identity cards, a lack of government accountability and the world's largest network of surveillance cameras.

Wikipedia founder brings search project

NEW YORK (AP)—The founder of Wikipedia says taking the online encyclopedia's collaborative approach into the field of search won't dethrone Google Inc. or another major search engine—at least not soon.

After months of talk and a few weeks of invitation-only testing, Wikia Search is to open to the general public next week.

Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales says his goal is to let volunteers improve search technology collectively, the way Wikipedia lets anyone add or change entries, regardless of expertise.

"That reduces the sort of bottleneck of two or three firms really controlling the flow of search traffic," said Wales, chairman of Wikia Inc., the for-profit venture behind the search project.

Engineers at Google and other search companies continually tweak their complex software algorithms to improve results and fight spammers—those who try to artificially boost the rankings of their own sites. Search companies have not disclosed many details to avoid tipping off competitors and spammers.

Wales' approach would open that process. Initially, participants will help make such decisions as whether a site on "Paris Hilton" refers to the celebrity or a French hotel.

Danny Sullivan, editor in chief of the industry Web site Search Engine Land, has his doubts. Finding all the Web sites to index and staying ahead of spammers are huge undertakings, Sullivan said.

"I think he doesn't really understand the scale of what Google has to handle in terms of the queries from around the world and the amount of traffic that flows to it and the attempts that are made to try to manipulate it," Sullivan said.

Wales said the project would launch with about 50 million to 100 million Web pages indexed, a fraction of the billions available with major search engines.

Life & Style

BEST SELLERS

(c) 2007 Los Angeles Times

Fiction

1. ***Captain's Fury***, by Jim Butcher (Ace: $24.95) Tavi of Calderon realizes he must join his Aleran with the enemy Canim to fight a mutual threat.
2. ***Book of the Dead***, by Patricia Cornwell (Putnam: $26.95) Forensics expert Kay Scarpetta goes to Rome to investigate a tennis champ's murder.
3. ***Dark Possession***, by Christine Feehan (Berkley: $24.95) A woman confronts shape-shifters and vampires in a Brazilian rain forest.
4. ***The Alphabet From A to Y With Bonus Letter Z!*** by Steve Martin and Roz Chast (Flying Dolphin: $17.95) Cartooned couplets.
5. ***Requiem for an Assassin***, by Barry Eisler (Putnam: $24.95) A Japanese American hit man is pulled from retirement to rescue a kidnapped friend.
6. ***Away***, by Amy Bloom (Random House: $23.95) A survivor of a Russian pogrom arrives in New York in 1924 and soon begins a search for her lost daughter.
7. ***On Chesil Beach***, by Ian McEwan (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday: $22) A couple face a cruel reality on their wedding night.
8. ***Blonde Faith***, by Walter Mosley (Little, Brown: $25.99) Easy Rawlins, torn up at losing his longtime love, must track down two missing friends.
9. ***Malice***, by Robert K. Tanenbaum (Atria: $26.95) A Manhattan prosecutor believes someone in the federal government is behind a plot against the pope.
10. ***Exit Ghost***, by Philip Roth (Houghton Mifflin: $26) Nathan Zuckerman finds everything changed in post-9/11 New York City, his solitude challenged.

Nonfiction

1. ***The Dangerous Book for Boys***, by Conn and Hal Iggulden (HarperCollins: $24.95) Learn how to tie knots, find true north and other essential skills.
2. ***The Daring Book for Girls***, by Andrea J. Buchanan and Miriam Peskowitz (HarperCollins: $24.95) A girls' handbook of skills and must-have knowledge.
3. ***Born Standing Up***, by Steve Martin (Scribner: $25) The groundbreaking comedian reflects on his childhood and the evolution of his art.
4. ***I Am America (and So Can You!)*** by Stephen Colbert (Grand Central: $26.99) The Colbert Report star expounds on the forces destroying America.
5. ***Boom!*** Voices of the Sixties, by Tom Brokaw (Random House: $28.95) Reflections on a decade of social change that swept America and its people.
6. ***A Family Christmas***, by Caroline Kennedy (Hyperion: $26.95) Reflections and writings on the history and spirit of Christmas in the United States.
7. ***The Nine***, by Jeffrey Toobin (Doubleday: $27.95) The New Yorker reporter and legal eagle details the inner workings and politics of the U.S. Supreme Court.
8. ***Good Dog***, Stay, by Anna Quindlen (Random House: $14.95) The bittersweet recollections of life with Beau, Quindlen's black Labrador retriever.
9. ***Clapton***, by Eric Clapton (Broadway: $26) The guitarist tells all—about the blues, becoming a rock legend, his bouts with addiction and his loves.
10. ***You: Staying Young***, by Michael F. Roizen and Mehmet C. Oz (Free Press: $26) Doctors explain how the body ages and how to counter those effects.

7 memorable DVD moments from '07

By JEN CHANEY
(C) 2007, THE WASHINGTON POST

I could add up the number of hours I spent this year watching DVD extras instead of, say, working out or spending time with my family. But then I'd realize just how out-of-whack my priorities are. Instead, I offer this list (in no particular order) of seven exceptional DVD moments from 2007, which hopefully will allow you to navigate directly to the good stuff. Hey, at least one of us should make efficient use of our time.

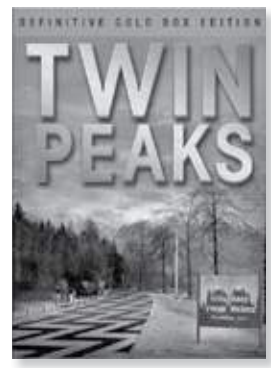
Most Entertaining Commentary

This is a three-way tie between a trio of tracks, all involving 2007's Hollywood Golden Boy, Judd Apatow. Before he struck it big by directing "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Knocked Up," the producer-filmmaker showed a real affinity for DVD, playing an instrumental role in the stellar extras on TV's "Freaks and Geeks" and "Undeclared." This year, he came through again, delivering laugh-out-loud commentary with Seth Rogen and Bill Hader for the "Knocked Up" DVD; surprisingly insightful audio alongside director Jake Kasdan for "The TV Set"; and, my personal favorite, an uproarious track on the year's other massive Apatow hit, "Superbad." After a bitter argument with star Jonah Hill—who refuses to stop cursing even though Apatow's 9-year-old daughter is in the room—EW's Smartest Man in Hollywood abruptly exits the recording booth. But the rest of the gang, including Rogen, director Greg Mottola and actor Michael Cera, soldiers on hilariously without him, proof that Apatow taught his students well.

Most Honest Documentary

It was filmed more than two decades ago and can be viewed online. But if you already possess Warner Bros.' totally-worth-owning Stanley Kubrick collection, set aside some time to watch daughter Vivian Kubrick's "The Making of 'The Shining'." Unlike today's polished DVD featurettes, which often focus on celebrating the awesomeness of every person involved in making a movie, this doc captures refreshingly real moments, including tense times on-set, Shelley Duvall's confession that she is jealous of co-star Jack Nicholson and the late Scatman Crothers nearly weeping during an interview.

Most Thorough DVD Doc



The Gold Box Edition of "Twin Peaks" earns major props for finally bringing together every single episode of David Lynch's small-town freakfest, including both versions of the pilot. But the collection rises to stellar status thanks to its extras, including the detailed "Secrets From Another Place," a feature-length look at the "Peaks" phenomenon that explores everything from the spooky atmosphere that pervaded the filming of the pilot to the candid admission that, as cast member Kimmy Robertson put it, "The whole second season pretty much sucked."

Most Danceable Bonus Point

Only one DVD forced me to get off the couch, and it was the Shake & Shimmy Edition of "Hairspray," which includes a feature that breaks down the choreography in two of the hit musical's key scenes. Trying to master these dance moves came close to making me break out in a sweat, which is more than I can say for some of my cable provider's fitness videos.

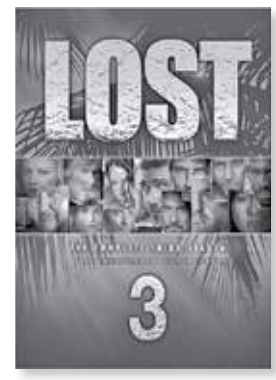
Geekiest DVD Packaging

The lack of any repackaged releases of "The Lord of the Rings" or "Matrix" trilogies blows this category wide open. And this year's winner has to be the "Blade Runner" Limited Edition Gift Set, which includes four versions of the movie, nine hours of bonus features and several collectibles (including your own personal miniature unicorn), all artfully packed into a silver briefcase. Putting this baby on your entertainment center shelf earns an automatic lifetime membership in the Sci-Fi Geeks of America Society.

Happiest TV DVD Debut

I know what you're thinking. The obvious answer here is "Silver Spoons: The Complete First Season." Sorry, fans of the Ricker, the TV show I was most excited to receive on DVD was the first season of "W.K.R.P. in Cincinnati." The collection certainly had its flaws: Most of the original music got dumped because of rights issues, and the extras were pretty minimal. But who cares when it's just so nice to see Dr. Johnny Fever, Herb Tarlec and Mr. Carlson, still convinced after all these years that turkeys can fly?

Most Abundant Easter Eggs



"Lost" fans live to dig for clues about what's really happening on that confounding, compelling island. The season-three DVD—yet another "Lost" box set brimming over with Easter eggs—gives all of them reason to continue hunting, with lots of gems tucked away in the elaborately conceived menu screens. I found several but, apparently, even more await.

Chaney is an editor and DVD columnist for WashingtonPost.com.

Tom Wolfe has new book, new publisher

NEW YORK (AP)—Tom Wolfe is working on a new novel and will release it through a new publisher, ending a 40-year run with Farrar, Straus & Giroux and signing with Little, Brown and Co.

"The opportunity to work with the American master Tom Wolfe is the kind of thrill and challenge that people entering book publishing dream of," Little, Brown Publisher Michael Pietsch said Wednesday.

"Tom Wolfe is one of the great writers of his generation and he has been one of FSG's most significant and best-loved authors," Farrar publisher Jonathan Galassi said. "We are sorry to part company, and wish him all happiness and success in this next phase of his work."

One of the original "New Journalists" of the 1960s, the 76-year-old Wolfe is known for such best-selling novels as "The Bonfire of the Vanities" and "A Man in Full," and for such nonfiction classics as "The Right Stuff" and "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test."

His new novel, "Back to Blood," will be a "Bonfire"-like tour of Miami, taking on "class, family, wealth, race, crime, sex, corruption, and ambition." Among the characters: a Cuban nurse married to a French sex doctor, a Haitian woman "who passes for Anglo" and "a freshman journalist on the trail of a Russian-mob-comes-to-Miami story."

Publication is scheduled for 2009.

Wolfe had been with Farrar, Straus since 1965 and the release of his first book, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby." His work has sold millions of copies, but his most recent novel, "I Am Charlotte Simmons," was a critical and commercial disappointment.

According to a publishing official familiar with negotiations, Farrar, Straus and Wolfe could not agree on a new contract: Having lost money on "Charlotte Simmons," the publisher was offering a reduced advance for "Back to Blood."

Writers switch publishers all the time, but Farrar, Straus has a remarkable history of company loyalty, holding on to Wolfe, Susan Sontag, Isaac Bashevis Singer and others for decades.

Wolfe's agent, Lynn Nesbit, said the parting "wasn't at all acrimonious." She also noted that Wolfe's editor at Little, Brown, Pat Strachan, used to edit the author at Farrar, Straus, working on "The Right Stuff" and "The Bonfire of the Vanities" among others.

"It's an exciting way to start the new year," Nesbit said. "He's feeling very energized."

Nesbit said Wolfe expects to complete the book in four years, a relatively short time for the hard-working author, who has taken up to a decade to finish a novel.

Saoirse Ronan's active imagination

By RACHEL ABRAMOWITZ

(C) 2008, LOS ANGELES TIMES

AP

In a file photo actress Saoirse Ronan poses on the press line at the Los Angeles premiere of the feature film "Atonement" in Beverly Hills, Calif. on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2007. Her role in "Atonement" earned Ronan a Golden Globe nomination, butshe hasn't read the Ian McEwan novel the movie is based on.

HOLLYWOOD—"She was one of those children possessed by a desire to have the world just so," writes Ian McEwan in his novel "Atonement." He is describing 13-year-old Briony Tallis, one of recent literature's most maddening heroines, brainy but impetuous, controlling but immature and blind to the cues of her heart and others'. "Her wish for a harmonious, organized world denied her the reckless possibilities of wrongdoing," McEwan writes—an ominous foreshadowing of how Briony, in her ferocious need to make sense of a narrative beyond her ken, naively destroys her sister's and her lover's lives. It's the act that dooms the young girl to a life of "Atonement."

The film "Atonement" opens on Briony tapping away on her manual typewriter her first play, "The Trials of Arabella." Snatching the completed project, she determinedly marches through her grand mansion of a home, her thin, tiny body turning corners at precise right angles, her gauzy white child's dress not quite covering the manic certainty with which she holds herself. While the posters of "Atonement" triumph the presence of the grown-up star Keira Knightley, the film wouldn't work without the innocent destructiveness of 13-year-old Saoirse Ronan.

"This is what I try to do with everything—is just be the person," says Ronan, at breakfast with her parents in a Los Angeles hotel. "Be the person I'm playing. That's what acting is. You're pretending to be someone else."

Ronan had flown in the previous night from Pennsylvania to attend the "Atonement" premiere, and she would be leaving in a few hours. In person, she has none of Briony's strait-laced quality. Dressed in a striped T-shirt and high-waisted jeans, she looks as limber and slouchy as any teenager, with a clear, open face and shiny brown hair that tumbles down to her shoulders. She has a casually cheery manner far from the automaton, preternaturally grown-up quality of some child actors. More surprisingly, she speaks in a thick Irish accent.

Ronan might be an acting savant. In a time when there are more than a few talented 13-year-olds around (including Abigail Breslin and Dakota Fanning), Ronan has managed to scoop up a raft of the most desired children's parts. In the coming year, she stars opposite Bill Murray in "City of Ember," director Gil Kenan's live-action fantasy follow-up to "Monster House." She plays Catherine Zeta-Jones' daughter and con partner in "Death Defying Acts" and, most notably, inhabits the role of 14-year-old Susie Salmon in Peter Jackson's upcoming screen version of "The Lovely Bones."

Ronan, whose first name is pronounced "Sertia" (it rhymes with inertia, one publicist helpfully points out) lives most of the year with her parents in the Irish countryside, two hours from Dublin. She attended a village school with just three teachers and 59 pupils. Ronan didn't do the child auditioning circuit but sent videotaped auditions she'd made with her dad, Paul, a well-known Irish stage actor who has appeared in the films "Veronica Guerin" and "The Devil's Own." He and his wife, Monica, and a friend are all eating with Saoirse, their only child.

In the case of "Atonement," she and Paul Ronan played Briony and Cecilia (her older sister), in a scene in which the two sisters were lying on the lawn on a hot, hot afternoon. The real Ronan home has a plush garden alongside a river.

> "This is what I try to do with everything—is just be the person. Be the person I'm playing. That's what acting is. You're pretending to be someone else.'

"Dad, remember when you used to do—'Cee, what do you think it would be like to be someone else? Cooler, I should hope,'" Ronan switches into a flawless English accent, as she quotes lines from the movie. Paul Ronan laughs.

"He used to do Keira's accent and do her voice. And put on a wig and dress," cracks Saoirse. She's so deadpan that it takes a moment to realize she's totally joking.

"I still can't fit into Keira's dresses," quips her father. "They're a bit snug."

It's clear the family is tight. Her parents still seem slightly surprised that their daughter turned out to be so talented.

When she was a small child, they used to listen to her create elaborate fantasies with her dolls. "She'd invent them in her mind. It was just amazing. She had great ear for accents, American and English," recalls Paul Ronan. "It was very entertaining to watch a child so young be so inventive. Coming from Ireland, you usually have a lot of family, with a lot of kids, and you see them in action, but very rarely do you see a child with such innate imagination."

Describing the turbulent relations between her "Toy Story" Woody doll and her Polly Pockets, Saoirse says, "They used to have affairs with each other, with the help of an English soap opera called 'Coronation Street.'"

"That's not a reflection on us," adds her mother, with a smile.

Undeniably, Ronan's imaginative instincts have carried her far. "Atonement" director Joe Wright remembers seeing her Briony videotaped audition: "The conviction of her performance was there even at that early stage and her total inhabitation of the character."

Wright says the real Ronan is "totally the opposite from Briony in every way—warm, very, very funny, very generous with her spirit and incredibly smart. She was my best friend on the set, really. The one thing she does have in common with Briony is an extraordinary imagination. It's that imagination she uses to empathize with the character. There's no sense of her dragging it up from inside—there's no sense of emotional recall in her (acting method). It's all the projection of her imagination and an act of empathy.

"It's very, very healthy as well," he continues. "There's no mopping up to do with her emotionally after each scene. She's doing a scene where she's crying or scared or intimidated, and we'd all be watching and be scared or crying or frightened. When it was over, we'd be left in that state, and she'd be up and asking where the tea and biscuits were."

Ronan says she just stumbled into acting when her father's agent called and asked if she wanted to audition for an Irish TV series, "The Clinic," which she did as a lark, and won the part. Another series followed, as did an amusing turn as Michelle Pfeiffer's daughter in the American film "I Could Never Be Your Woman," which has not come out in the States yet. "By the time I got to 'Atonement,' I knew this is what I wanted to do. This was such a meaty role. There's no other character like her."

Ronan hasn't read the books of "Atonement" or "The Lovely Bones," as they both touch on topics that aren't suitable for her yet, she says.

"The Lovely Bones" was another audition that Ronan did with her father on videotape. She had never even met Jackson, or his collaborators Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, when her agent called out of the blue to say she'd landed the part.

"It wasn't one of those things where you hear about it and you jump up and down and scream. We just sat there (on the couch in their living room) and we're trying to figure out what they just said. 'Wait a minute, I've been cast in a Peter Jackson film.' For a few days, it was weird. I was just trying to get my head around it."

Based on the Alice Sebold best seller, "The Lovely Bones" is the story of 14-year-old Susie Salmon, who's raped and murdered by a pedophile and narrates her story from heaven as she looks down on her family trying to cope with the tragedy.

Ronan loves Susie as much as she does Briony.

"It's a funny script and a funny movie," she says of "The Lovely Bones," which she's filming in Pennsylvania and New Zealand, Jackson's homeland and the stand-in for heaven. "It makes people think—even though someone has passed, they haven't really gone and they're still with you. After doing 'The Lovely Bones,' I feel I'm able to put my mind at ease a little more. I don't know what happens after you die, but it does put your mind at ease when you see Susie. She tries to make a connection with the living, and she does. But just little connections. She never gets to give her mom or dad a hug again. She has to learn to let go. That's what her family has to do as well. That's their journey—to learn to let go."

What's new in French cafes? Clean air

AP

A Parisian smokes a cigar on the pavement terrace of "Les Deux Magots" cafe-restaurant on Saint Germain des Pres square in Paris, Wednesday Jan. 2, 2008, the only place where it is allowed to smoke, on the second day of the total ban on smoking in French cafes, restaurants and bars. Visible in background is Saint Germain Pres church.

PARIS (AP)—What's that nice smell? For drinkers and diners in France on Wednesday, the answer was fresh air. France reinvented itself with a new ban on smoking in cafes, restaurants and night spots, the most drastic measure yet to curb the habit in a country where cigarettes were long a potent lifestyle symbol.

Some diehard smokers blamed health-obsessed Americans for starting the trend. But others were delighted by being able to sip or serve a strong espresso without finishing the day with clothes smelling of second-hand smoke.

"It's a new art of living," Health Minister Roselyne Bachelot insisted on a visit to a cafe.

With the ban, France joined the ranks of European countries and more than two dozen U.S. states that have enacted anti-smoking restrictions. In 1994, California became the first U.S. state to ban smoking in restaurants and bars.

Turkey's parliament on Wednesday was debating a proposal to ban smoking in all enclosed public areas, such as bars, restaurants and coffeehouses.

In France, a New Year's Day reprieve allowed revelers their last legal drags in public places before the law took effect, the latest measure in a progressive crackdown that began 15 years ago.

Some called it the end of an era in a nation that long portrayed the cigarette as a sign of freedom, rebellion, individualism or even intellect, indeed, a certain idea of the country.

"They're banning tobacco practically like it's cocaine," said Jean-Yves Oussedik, drawing on his pipe—and braving a near-freezing chill—on the sidewalk terrace of cafe Les Deux Magots, a famed Left Bank institution. Outdoors is now the only place where smoking is allowed at cafes.

Personalities like author Albert Camus and thinker Jean-Paul Sartre smoked their cigarettes and pipes in the warm, leathery interior of Les Deux Magots, once a gathering place for literati.

The more than century-old establishment has actually forced smokers outside since last February, when smoking was banned in offices, train stations and other public places.

But has it lost its soul in the process?

"No," says a waiter there for the past 19 years who gave his name only as Gilles. "On the contrary, we are breathing."

Dinos Rodopoulos, a 51-year-old Greek media executive smoking with his wife on the cafe's outdoor terrace, said he felt a little like an outlaw.

"It's fun to have the feeling of illegality," he said, although he also lamented that France was becoming health-obsessed like the United States.

Under the measure, those caught lighting up inside face a fine of more than $90, while owners who turn a blind eye to smoking face a nearly $200 fine.

However, the health minister said dialogue, not punishment, would be the first step with fines leveled only against "foot-draggers" and "repeat offenders."

On the first full day of the law, one could find all points of view, from supporters to hardcore smokers saying their liberty had been infringed upon.

"People will get used to it gradually," said Alex Nesanir, who runs "La Havane," where the smell of stale smoke clung to the walls.

One also could find shivering smokers looking on the bright side, like Elie Tasso, 49, who saw conviviality rising to new heights huddling outside "Le Dragon" restaurant after lunch.

"It allows us to discuss ... We all have the same worry, to smoke," he said.

In Celebration of Her New Life

Margarita Sablan Cabrera Tudela

February 29, 1936 — January 01, 2008

In her new life, she now joins her:

Mother: Cecilia Palacios Sablan Cabrera Tudela
Father: Jose San Nicolas Cabrera
Step Father: Augustin Sablan Tudela
Sister: Carmen Cabrera Tudela
Brother: Antonio Sablan Cabrera
Mother In-Law: Rosa Palacios Cabrera Tudela
Father In-Law: Isidro Sablan Tudela
Son: Aldebert C. Tudela
Grandson: Robert Atalig Tudela
Granddaughter: Sabra Tudela Camacho

She was survived by her:

Husband: **Jose Cabrera Tudela**
Children:

Francisco C./Cynthia A. Tudela — Aldebert/Lantin; Joe Randy/Connie (Joe Randy, Roquel Albie); Angelo/Connie (Keyona, Veronica, Vynna, Angelo Jr.); Sydney; Perry/Joelyn, Robert Dee.
Diego C./Victoria 0. Tudela — Pauline; Christopher/Geraldine; Dominic/Didiich (Dishun, Diviane Neline); Derrick; Elaine; Lionel.
Brian C. Tudela — Christopher Allan, Amber Rosean; Nicholas Edward, Mercia Alexandra; Priscilla.
Priscilla C. Tudela — Roland Aldebert; Jocelyn Margaret (SayAna Lyn).
Bernice T./Calistro I. Reyes — Carleen/Benjamin (Leischeng); Calistro Jr./Phyllisina (Magdalen Ann, Toa L. Pangelinan, Malosi Manuel); Abraham; Lorraine.
Lillian C. Tudela/Jose M. Camacho — Maridel; Joeleen (Nicholas); †Sabra.
Alvin C./Rose Marie T. Tudela — Natasha; Shaina; Ladaina; Jeremiah, Cecilia, Java Lynn.
James C./Clarisa C. Tudela — James/Gwendolyn (James Jr., Priscilla); Joel/Shawna (Joel Peter); Christian; Isa.
Gary C. Tudela

Brothers In-Law / Sisters In-law:

†Basilisa C. Tudela
Alejandro C./†Romana V. Tudela/Ana Y. Tudela
†Candido C./Consolacion A. Tudela
Margaret T./†Edward J. Riva
†Ismael C. Tudela
†Natalie T./†Charles R. Ronsheimer
†Sylveria T./Irenio Asuncion
Teresita T./Daniel L. Camacho
Jesusa C. Tudela
†Inocencia C. Tudela
Rafael DLG. Tudela

Care Givers: Daisy Dela Cruz and Adelina Mandia

Survived by numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and grandchildren.

Daily Mass is being offered at 6:00 a.m. from January 2-8, 2008 at Mt. Carmel Cathedral except for Sunday, January 6, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. Nightly rosary is being prayed at 8:00 p.m. from January 2-8, 2008 at Mt. Carmel Cathedral. On Wednesday, January 9, 2008, her remains will be escorted from Nuestra Señora dela Paz Memorial Chapel to Mt. Carmel Cathedral for final viewing and last respects beginning 8:00 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11:00 a.m. followed by interment service at Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Please join us in prayers.

Jose Cabrera Tudela, Children and Families.

Bearded Letterman returns after 2 months

NEW YORK (AP) — A fully bearded David Letterman opened his first show in two months by walking out amid dancing girls holding picket signs for striking TV writers. "I know what you're thinking," Letterman said of his mostly white beard. "You think Dave looks like a cattle-drive cook."

One of five talk-show hosts to return to work—and, with Craig Ferguson, one of only two with working writers—Letterman was joined by comic Robin Williams and a cameo by Hillary Clinton on tape from Iowa.

"Dave has been off the air for eight long weeks because of the writers strike," the Democratic presidential candidate said in a cold opening to Letterman's "Late Show." "Tonight, he's back. Oh, well, all good things come to an end."

During his monologue, stagehand Biff Henderson interrupted Letterman to say, "When are the writers coming back?"

"They're back, Biff," Letterman said.

Williams teased Letterman unmercifully about the beard, alternately comparing him to Gen. Robert E. Lee, a rabbi and a mullah in Iraq.

"My God, man, you've aged," Williams said.

Letterman's top 10 list was delivered by striking writers, offering their strike demands. They included "Complementary tote bag with next insulting contract offer" and "Hazard pay for breaking up fights on 'The View.'"

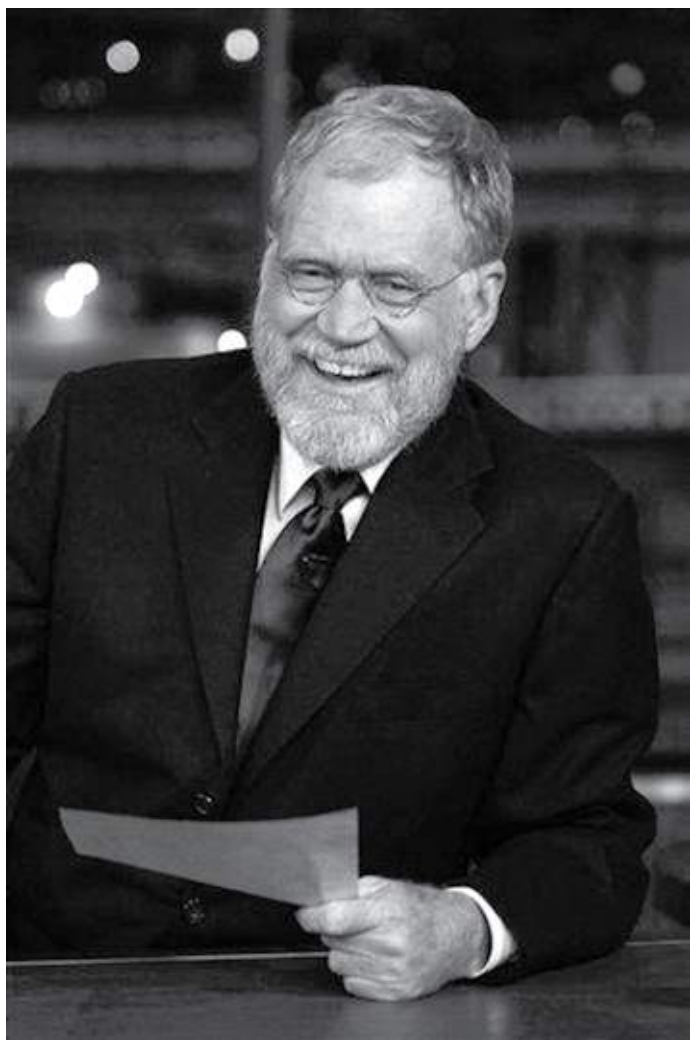
The return of TV's late-night funnymen after a two-month strike hiatus turned into a bizarre mix of picketing and presidential politics Wednesday as Mike Huckabee headed for Jay Leno's show and Clinton turned to Letterman.

GOP hopeful Huckabee appeared confused over which of the two late-night hosts had reached a separate deal with the union representing striking TV and movie writers.

Huckabee said he supports the writers and did not think he would be crossing a picket line, because he believed the writers had made an agreement to allow late-night shows on the air. That's not the case with Leno, and pickets outside Leno's Burbank, Calif., studio targeted Huckabee.

"Huckabee is a scab," read one picket sign.

Late Wednesday, the Writers Guild of America issued a statement saying that the guild "thanks the former governor for his strong statement of support for striking writers and hopes that he will not cross the picket lines at NBC."



AP

In this photo released by CBS, a bearded David Letterman is seen at his desk on the set of "The Late Show with David Letterman, Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008.

However, Huckabee appeared on the show despite the calls from the striking writers, according to NBC.

Letterman and fellow CBS host Craig Ferguson struck deals to allow writers to come back to work on Wednesday. NBC's Leno and Conan O'Brien and ABC's Jimmy Kimmel were back at work Wednesday without writers.

Writers also picketed outside of the Rockefeller Center studio where O'Brien tapes his show each night. Comics Bob Saget and Dwayne Perkins and musicians Robert Gordon and Chris Spedding were O'Brien's first-night guests.

The picketing writers said they were hoping to encourage people not to appear on the shows where writers weren't working. Michael Winship, president of the WGA East, said he expected Letterman's "Late Show" to be a "bully pulpit" for striking writers and their issues.

Leno's staff writers, who regularly picket at one of the gates to NBC studios, did not show up on Wednesday. Writers insist they're demonstrating against NBC, not against Leno, who was supportive of his writers in the early days of the strike.

"It must be difficult for them to picket their own boss," said Allan Katz, a veteran sitcom writer. "Probably Jay Leno understands."

Besides depriving the nation of punch lines, the two months of reruns have been devastating for the networks—particularly NBC.

Late-night leader Leno is averaging 4.4 million viewers this season, losing a quarter of his audience from last season. Before the strike, his audience was off 10 percent, according to Nielsen Media Research.

Letterman's average of 3.6 million viewers is 15 percent off last season. Before the strike, his viewership was down 9 percent. Leno's audience was obviously far less interested in reruns or—even worse for NBC—decided to sample Letterman instead.

Kimmel's audience of 1.8 million viewers is slightly up from last season, because it follows "Nightline," which has been making fresh shows.

O'Brien's audience is down 29 percent from last season and he's been running virtually neck and neck with Ferguson: O'Brien has 1.8 million viewers, Ferguson 1.7 million. Now Ferguson returns with writers and O'Brien without.

How big the advantage might be for CBS likely depends on how long the strike lasts. At least at the beginning, the writer-less shows may draw viewers curious to see how the hosts respond.

The CBS programs will also probably have bigger-name guests. The Screen Actors Guild has urged its members to appear with Letterman and Ferguson. It's unclear whether Hollywood's glitterati will be willing to cross picket lines for face time on national television.

Besides being without writers, Leno, O'Brien and Kimmel will be unable to perform many familiar comic bits, including traditional monologues, because of strike rules.

Comedy Central's topical nightly comedies, "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report," will return Monday without striking writers.

Filler evident in late-night TV's return

NEW YORK (AP)—Late-night TV hosts returned to the air Wednesday after a two-month hiatus, displaying support for striking writers, plenty of creative stretch marks - and at least two scruffy beards.

David Letterman walked onstage amid dancing girls holding picket signs. His writers are back on the job, but NBC's Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien and ABC's Jimmy Kimmel returned without theirs.

Leno, however, offered a monologue that included jokes he said he had crafted beforehand. Whether that violated rules of the striking Writers Guild of America - to which Leno belongs - was not immediately clear.

"We are not using outside guys," Leno said in the monologue, according to a transcript provided by NBC. "We are following the guild thing ... we can write for ourselves."

The union said Wednesday it was withholding comment until it spoke to Leno about his show, which, like the other returning programs, was laden with references to the strike.

The walkout, Leno joked, "has already cost the town over half a billion dollars. Five hundred million dollars! Or as Paul McCartney calls that, 'A divorce.'"

Guests on the shows included two presidential candidates - with the Democrat, Hillary Clinton, making a camero appearance on Letterman's union-sanctioned "Late Show" while Republican Mike Huckabee ventured across picket lines to play bass guitar and trade jokes with Leno on "Tonight."

The biggest celebrity guest, Robin Williams, appeared with Letterman, while Leno welcomed chef Emeril Lagasse and rapper Chingy.

Filler was immediately evident on the shows without writers. O'Brien, sporting facial growth to match his red hair, showed off Christmas cards, danced on his table as his band played the Clash's "The Magnificent Seven" and tried to see how long he could spin his wedding ring on his desk. Leno took questions from his audience.

There was also plenty of free on-air promotion for the guild's cause.

"The writers are correct, by the way. I'm a writer ... I'm on the side of the writers," Leno said.

"I want to make this clear. I support their cause," O'Brien said. "These are very talented, very creative people who work extremely hard. I believe what they're asking for is fair."

Letterman, who had grown a gray beard, brought writers on to recite a top 10 list of their strike demands. They included "complimentary tote bag with next insulting contract offer" and "Hazard pay for breaking up fights on 'The View.'"

"You're watching the only show on the air that has jokes written by union writers," Letterman said. "I hear you at home thinking to yourself, 'This crap is written?'"

Williams teased Letterman unmercifully about his beard, alternately comparing him to Gen. Robert E. Lee, a rabbi and an Iraqi mullah.

A clean-shaven Craig Ferguson opened his "The Late Late Show" on CBS with a sketch showing him spending time during the strike tending sheep in Scotland - complete with a long, fake beard.

Not all the hosts supported the writers. During his opening, Kimmel criticized WGA members picketing Leno and O'Brien: "I don't want to depart too much from the party line, but I think it's ridiculous. Jay Leno, he paid his staff while they were out. Conan did the same thing. I don't know. I just think at a certain point you back off a little bit."

AP

In this photo released by NBC, presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee talks with Jay Leno during the taping of "The Tonight Show" on Wednesday Jan. 2, 2008 in Burbank, Calif.

On the eve of the Iowa caucus, presidential politics intruded: Huckabee appeared on Leno despite his apparent confusion about the strike and a bid by picketers to keep him away, and Clinton taped a cameo introducing Letterman.

"Dave has been off the air for eight long weeks because of the writers strike," she said. "Tonight, he's back. Oh, well, all good things come to an end."

Huckabee said he supports the writers and did not think he would be crossing a picket line, because he believed the writers had made an agreement to allow late-night shows on the air. But that's not the case with Leno; "Huckabee is a scab," read one picket sign outside Leno's Burbank, Calif., studio.

The writers guild urged Huckabee not to cross their picket line after he flew out to California. But Huckabee appeared on Leno, even showing off his electric guitar playing with the band.

"Huckabee claims he didn't know," chief union negotiator John Bowman said. "I don't know what that means in terms of trusting him as a future president."

For fans of the late-night hosts, the controversy was secondary to seeing their favorites again. Chuck Gunther of Grand Junction, Colo., stood on a sidewalk outside of Letterman's New York studio on a frigid night hoping to get into the audience.

"When Dave is live, it's fresh and new every night - instead of watching reruns of 'Seinfeld,'" he said.

Letterman had writers because his production company, Worldwide Pants, struck a separate deal with the guild. The deal also allowed writers to return to Ferguson's "Late Late Show."

Leno's staff writers, who regularly picket at one of the gates to NBC studios, did not show up on Wednesday, instead walking the line at NBC Universal, the guild said. Writers insist they're demonstrating against NBC, not Leno, who was supportive of his writers in the strike's early days.

"It must be difficult for them to picket their own boss," said Allan Katz, a veteran sitcom writer. "Probably Jay Leno understands."

Comedy Central's topical nightly comedies, "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report," will return Monday without striking writers.

Associated Press writers Deepti Hajela, Libby Quaid, Jake Coyle and Lynn Elber, and Raquel Maria Dillon, contributed to this report.

We ask the stars: What was your worst job?

(c) 2008, The Washington Post

"I worked on a pig farm when I was 10. My job was to put the piglets in a five-gallon bucket, and if (we) didn't get all the sows in ... to run like hell because they will try and kill you."

—SKEET ULRICH ("Jericho")

"(In college), the part-time job I had was in a not very terrific shoe store on Hollywood Boulevard. I sold these purses. ... They called the worst ones 'doozies,' and if you could sell a doozy, you'd get an extra 25 cents in your paycheck. I could always sell a doozy to a man. I felt guilty, but I needed that quarter."

—CAROL BURNETT

"I was 14 years old, and the state (of Connecticut) allowed us during our summer vacation to pick tobacco. ... You're under these tents, and the heat is incredible."

— JOSEPH MASCOLO ("Days of Our Lives")

"When I was in high school, my best friend and I were going to work in Six Flags ... because we figured it would be a great way to meet girls. ... My job was sewing names on sailor hats ... and no girl has ever come up to a guy sewing names on sailor hats."

— JEFF FOXWORTHY ("Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?")

> "After college, the only job I could get back in Hyannis (Mass.) was emptying the trash at the local Macy's and having all my buddies come by and see me emptying trash barrels, like, 'Mmm, you're really doing well, aren't you, Neal?' So that was a character builder."
>
> **— NEAL McDONOUGH ("Tin Man")**

"One summer I worked at a bakery, and I made croissants and I just kept eating them as they'd come off the thing, so all summer ... all my friends were in their bikinis and I was in the bakery, eating croissants and getting a little pudgy. ... Just kidding."

— KELLY RUTHERFORD ("Gossip Girl")

"One of the worst jobs I ever had was Spanish dancing in night clubs. ... I was 15, 16, 17. There were a lot of lecherous men fooling around, trying to get some action from me, and I was just a very young, innocent girl."

— RITA MORENO ("Cane")

"I did a movie as an actor called 'The Purple People Eater,' (in which) this boy, myself, thought he saw a purple people eater out from the sky that had one long horn and one big eye. ... This, apparently was enough to green-light a movie ... it was a catastrophe."

—NEIL PATRICK HARRIS ("How I Met Your Mother")

"I got a job at H agen-Dazs and hated it. You were supposed to weigh the amount of the scoop, and I thought it was ridiculous that (customers) got such small scoops."

— ANNE HECHE ("Men in Trees")

"I had to go into people's homes and make them feel guilty — that if you didn't buy a fire alarm or a smoke alarm, your children could burn up. ... It was a horrible job. I think it lasted about two weeks until I called my dad, said, 'Dad, can you send me an American Express card?' And I went back to being a waiter."

— DAVID HASSELHOFF ("America's Got Talent")

"When I was in high school I worked at an amusement park operating a roller coaster, out in the blistering heat all day. ... Some street gang came in one day and decided they wanted to take over the amusement park. I showed them how to work the roller coaster and I got in the car and went home."

— LESLIE DAVID BAKER ("The Office")

"A guy when I was in college was building a golf course, and it was just a pile of rocks and we had to go and clear all the rocks off the land. And it was about 110 degrees. ... That's when I realized I was going to finish college."

— JOHN MADDEN ("Sunday Night Football")

"I was a delivery boy for a long time at a sub shop in New Hampshire, and that was a rough job. At the time, I was driving a car with a really bad clutch. It would pop out. I'd have to call (someone) to rewire the clutch. So that was a long, hot summer."

— SETH MEYERS ("Saturday Night Live")

"I was a maid in a hotel in Santa Cruz (Calif.). It wasn't the worst job, actually. It was kind of nice. You would work by yourself, you turn on the television and you clean up, but it was as far away from my dream as it possibly could be. ... I think if you have pride in your job, no matter what it is, it can be fulfilling."

— CAMRYN MANHEIM ("Ghost Whisperer")

Striking film and television writers picket outside NBC Studios Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008, in Burbank, Calif.

Golden Globes at risk as strike heats up

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Golden Globe Awards were thrust into deeper jeopardy Wednesday when the striking writers guild refused to negotiate with Globe organizers about staging a picket-free ceremony.

The actors union then said it would advise celebrity nominees and presenters to boycott the show, which is scheduled to be televised Jan. 13 on NBC. That would rob the boozy, informal affair of the star power that makes the Globes the official kickoff to Hollywood's awards season.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which stages the Globes, had hoped last-minute negotiations with the Writers Guild of America would allow the show to go on. But the guild said Wednesday afternoon that striking writers still intend to picket.

"The WGA has great respect and admiration for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, but we are engaged in a crucial struggle that will protect our income and intellectual property rights for generations to come," it said in a statement. "We will continue to do everything in our power to bring industry negotiations to a fair conclusion."

Jorge Camara, president of the HFPA, said in a statement earlier Wednesday that the organization was negotiating with the guild to reach an "an interim agreement" that would "ultimately permit the Golden Globe Awards to be

See GOLDEN on Page 34

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Sunday	1:25	4:25	7:25	
Mon thru Thurs		4:25	7:25	

Ed Burns, Shannyn Sossamon
Horror, Remake • Rated PG13

Synopsis
Beth Raymond is traumatized when she witnesses the gruesome deaths of two friends just days apart. Even more disturbing, she knows that both of them had received chilling cell phone messages—actual recordings of their own horrifying last moments. Impossibly, the calls were received days before they died, but each death occurred precisely when and how the messages foretold.

The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep

Friday		4:20	7:30	9:50
Saturday	1:15	4:20	7:30	9:50
Sunday	1:15	4:20	7:30	
Mon thru Thurs		4:20	7:30	

Emily Watson, Ben Chaplin
Family, Adventure • Rated PG

Synopsis
When Angus, a young Scottish boy, finds an enchanted egg, he takes it home and soon finds himself face-to-face with an amazing creature: the mythical "water horse" of Scottish lore. Angus begins a journey of discovery, facing his greatest fears and risking his life to protect a secret that would give birth to a legend.

National Treasure: Book of Secrets

Friday		4:00	7:00	9:45
Saturday	1:00	4:00	7:00	9:45
Sunday	1:00	4:00	7:00	
Mon thru Thurs		4:00	7:00	

Nicolas Cage, Diane Kruger
Action, Adventure • Rated PG

Charlie Wilson's War

Friday		4:10	7:15	9:30
Saturday	1:20	4:10	7:15	9:30
Sunday	1:20	4:10	7:15	
Mon thru Thurs		4:10	7:15	

Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts
Comedy, Biopic • Rated R

Walk Hard: Dewey Cox Story

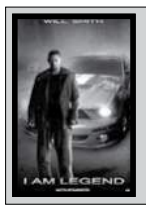
Friday		@	7:05	9:55
Saturday	@	@	7:05	9:55
Sunday	@	@	7:05	
Mon thru Thurs		@	7:05	

John C. Reilly, Jenna Fischer
Comedy, Music • Rated R

P.S. I Love You

Friday		4:30	@	@
Saturday	1:30	4:30	@	@
Sunday	1:30	4:30	@	
Mon thru Thurs		4:30	@	

Hilary Swank, Gerald Butler
Drama, Adaptation • Rated PG13



I Am Legend

Friday		4:15	7:20	10:00
Saturday	1:10	4:15	7:20	10:00
Sunday	1:10	4:15	7:20	
Mon thru Thurs		4:15	7:20	

Will Smith, Alice Braga
Action, Sci-Fi, Adventure • Rated PG13

Alvin & The Chipmunks

Friday		4:05	7:10	9:35
Saturday	1:05	4:05	7:10	9:35
Sunday	1:05	4:05	7:10	
Mon thru Thurs		4:05	7:10	

Jason Lee, Cameron Richardson
Comedy, Family • Rated PG

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Spears' lawyers ask to quit custody case

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Britney Spears' lawyers in her custody battle with ex-husband Kevin Federline are quitting. The law firm Trope and Trope asked a court Wednesday to be relieved as Spears' attorneys. The firm says there's been a "breakdown" in communication with the pop princess that makes representing her "impossible," according the filing, obtained by CelebTV.com.

A message left with a publicist for Spears' record label was not immediately returned.

Spears and Federline have been wrangling for months over custody of their sons, 2-year-old Sean Preston and 1-year-old Jayden James.

Federline has temporary custody because Spears, who has limited visitation rights, has defied court orders. The two were married in October 2004 and finalized their divorce in July.

On a separate legal front, an attorney for Spears wants the city attorney's office to prove that the pop star is a permanent California resident and is subject to state laws that require her to have a valid California driver's license.

AP

Britney Spears arrives for the grand opening party of LAX nightclub at the Luxor hotel-casino in Las Vegas, in a Sept. 1, 2007 file photo.

Spears faces up to a year of probation if convicted in a misdemeanor case of driving without a valid license, a charge to which she has pleaded not guilty. The case stems from a videotaped fender-bender in a parking lot in August. A hit-and-run charge has been dismissed.

Spears attorney J. Michael Flanagan earlier Wednesday requested that prosecutors be required to demonstrate that Spears, who owns homes in Louisiana and Florida, intends to make Los Angeles her permanent legal home.

"If they can establish that Britney is domiciled here in California, that she permanently intends to stay here, then she does have a requirement to get a license," Flanagan said in an interview. "Basically, it's a fix-it ticket."

Flanagan said Spears had a valid Louisiana license at the time of the incident and got a California license six days after the complaint was filed.

A call seeking comment from the city attorney's office was not immediately returned. The next court date is Jan. 25.

Minnelli to perform again after collapse

NEW YORK (AP)—Start spreading the news: Liza Minnelli will sing again.

Almost three weeks after collapsing during a show in Sweden, the 61-year-old entertainer was doing fine and preparing for her next gig, Minnelli's lawyer, Allen Arrow, told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

"Not to worry," said Arrow. He would not elaborate on Minnelli's health scare.

Arrow said Minnelli was going back into rehearsals at the end of the week, and will resume her touring schedule on Jan. 12 in Providence, R.I.

The singer was performing in a Christmas show Dec. 12 in Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city, when she collapsed while walking offstage. She flew to the United States the next day on the advice of doctors there.

"She was that sick," Arrow said. "You wonder why she had the courage to get on the stage when she shouldn't have."

Minnelli, the daughter of Judy Garland, won an Oscar and a Golden Globe for her portrayal of Sally Bowles in the 1972 film "Cabaret." She won an Emmy for the 1972 TV special "Liza with a Z," and Tony Awards in 1974 and 1978.

Eddie Murphy marries Tracey Edmonds

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Eddie Murphy celebrated New Year's Day by tying the knot with film producer Tracey Edmonds.

The pair exchanged vows Tuesday on a private island off Bora Bora in French Polynesia in front of a small group of family and friends, their representatives told People magazine.

A call to Murphy's publicist, Arnold Robinson, wasn't immediately returned early Wednesday.

Murphy and Edmonds began dating last year. They were engaged in July.

Murphy, 46, has five children from his marriage to Nicole Mitchell Murphy, who filed for divorce in 2005. He also has a daughter with Spice Girls singer Melanie Brown.

Edmonds, 40, has two sons from her 13-year marriage to Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds. As head of Edmonds Entertainment Group Inc., she has produced the film and television series "Soul Food."

Murphy's film credits include "Dreamgirls," and the "Beverly Hills Cop," "Nutty Professor," "Shrek" and "Dr. Doolittle" movies.

AP

In a file photo Eddie Murphy and Tracey Edmonds arrive at "Movies Rock: A Celebration of Music in Film," at the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles, Sunday, Dec. 2, 2007.

GOLDEN

From Page 33

broadcast as scheduled, without picket lines."

Twenty million people watched last year's ceremony on NBC. The network had no comment Wednesday.

Some Hollywood observers have theorized that without scripts and celebrities, awards shows might have to return to the relatively private affairs they were before television rather than risk embarrassment. Yet the organizations behind the Oscars and Globes are heavily dependent on the tens of millions of dollars their broadcasts bring in from network licensing deals, which may force them to televise their shows anyway.

The Globes organizers sought an agreement similar to the one reached Friday by David Letterman's production company. It allows guild members to write for "The Late Show With David Letterman" despite the strike, which began Nov. 5. Letterman's show returned to the air Wednesday night.

"'The Late Show with David Letterman' and the 'Golden Globe Awards' are similar in structure and are administered in the same way" because each is produced by an independent company and neither is owned by the networks that broadcast them, Camara's statement continued.

Letterman's show is produced by Worldwide Pants. The Golden Globe Awards are produced by dick clark productions.

The guild statement said dick clark productions is among those that have been struck.

"As previously announced, the Writers Guild will be picketing the Golden Globe Awards," it said.

Celebrity nominees and presenters are unlikely to attend the ceremony, according to a statement issued Wednesday by Screen Actors Guild President Alan Rosenberg.

"Unless and until there is an agreement between the WGA and HFPA, we will advise our members of their rights with respect to not crossing WGA picket lines and/or not appearing on programs using non-union writers," he said.

Rosenberg said a meeting with Golden Globe actor nominees was scheduled for later this week.

Man regrets single-minded focus on wife of 30 years

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DearAbby

DEAR ABBY: I have been married to the same woman for more than 30 years. My wife has recently been diagnosed with cancer. During all the years of our marriage, I blocked out everyone else because I thought all I needed was her. Now my biggest fear is that if I should lose her, I'll be completely alone. What in my personality caused me to do this?

—REGRETFUL IN LOS ANGELES

DEAR REGRETFUL: It's possible that your wife has fulfilled all of your needs for companionship during your marriage —and/or you may not be a particularly social animal. Please don't waste your time looking backward and feeling bad about what you "should" have done but didn't. So many advances have been made in the treatment of cancer; your wife could survive to spend many more happy years with you.

If your fear is that, in the event of your wife's death, you will face a bleak and solitary future, please realize that eligible widowers in your age bracket are highly desirable. Rather than worrying about being socially isolated, worry more about holding the "casserole brigade" at bay until you're far enough along in the grieving process that you don't get involved too quickly.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm a divorced woman with two grown children. My daughter is 24; my son is 19. I am a professional firefighter and in excellent shape. I recently met a man at the gym, and we were mutually attracted. He's a firefighter in a nearby city, and we have mutual friends. There has been some discussion about going on a date, but so far nothing has transpired.

The problem, as my daughter sees it, is that he's 16 years younger than I am and one year older than she is. She's upset by the age difference and says it is "disturbing." My fiance died suddenly two years ago, and I have only recently begun dating again. I asked her to be happy for me. She responded that she thinks it's great that I'm pretty enough and in good enough shape to attract a 25-year-old, but it's "not right."

I love my daughter, but I don't want to live my life to make her happy anymore. She's an adult. Neither of my kids lives at home. I see them about once a month or so.

My daughter has discussed this with her friends, who all side with her. Because I work with men, I threw the ball into their court. They all said, "Great! Go for it!"

Why can't my daughter be happy for me? She would rather I date someone in his 40s—and I would, if I met someone who showed any interest.

My profession is a difficult one for the average man to accept. They don't like the fact that I spend so much time around other men. I feel as though my daughter is turning this latest dating interest into something lewd and tawdry when it is far from it. What should I do?

—TINA IN TEXAS

DEAR TINA: Understand that your daughter may feel threatened because you are drawing from the same dating pool that she's fishing in. Then decide that if that man finally asks you out, you're going to live your own life and keep it private. From my perspective, too much conversation has already occurred. You have been put on the defensive, but you don't owe anyone an apology.

■ ■ ■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

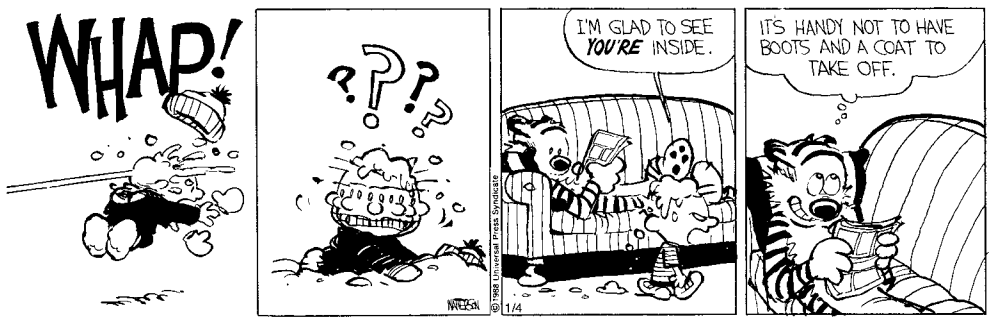
■ ■ ■

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



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By Jim Davis

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YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER
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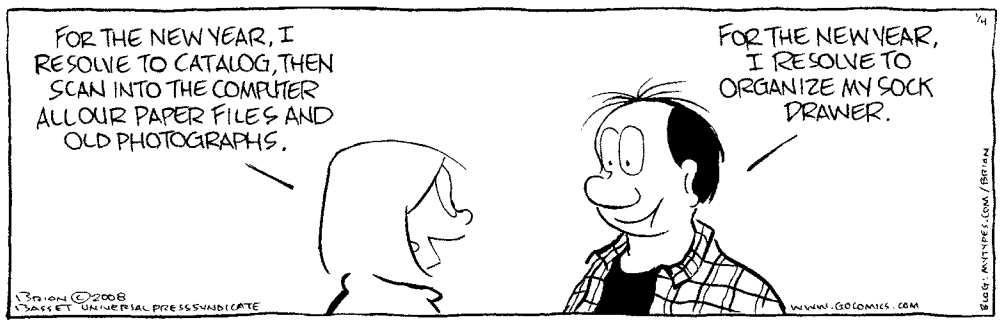
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset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The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Towns
6 "Bam!"
9 Raw rock
12 Dizzying designs
13 Mimic
14 Gender
15 Ancient Roman port
16 Workaday grind
18 Beast
20 Culture medium
21 Pismire
23 Affirmative action?
24 Skilled
25 Out of bounds
27 "Aida" composer
29 Period of decline
31 Blue shades
35 Fillies' mothers
37 No purebred
38 Reached
41 1950s DJ's stack
43 Festive
44 Belligerent deity
45 Kitchen device
47 Hoarder of a sort
49 Wipe out
52 Biblical verb suffix
53 Rocks
54 Chipped in
55 — Moines
56 Garden plot ...
57 ... and what may grow there

DOWN
1 Greet the villain
2 Boom times
3 Knocking noise
4 Smile
5 Blotch
6 Procession
7 October stone
8 Drench
9 Orange variety
10 Summarize
11 Put forth
17 Curie discovery
19 Man with a van
21 Keep talking
22 Ultramodernist
24 Wood-shaping tool
26 Grayish-red
28 Grates
30 Roscoe
32 Kids (Sl.)
33 Greek vowel
34 Pigs' digs
36 Walking on air
38 Stared open-mouthed
39 Speak from the soapbox
40 Georgia and Cal
42 Remove wool
45 Spiked club
46 Cube-maker Rubik
48 Eve, originally
50 Witness
51 Mag. staffers

Solution time: 25 mins.

Y	O	W	L	■	D	E	B	■	S	C	O	W
A	R	I	A	■	O	V	A	■	H	A	I	R
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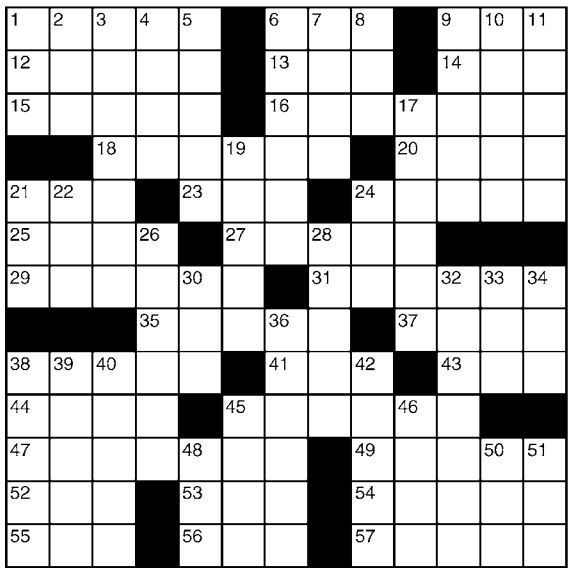
E	G	O	■	■	A	I	R	■	■	A	R	R
P	O	R	R	I	D	G	E	■	E	D	G	Y
■	■	K	E	N	■	■	E	M	S	■	■	■
P	O	L	A	N	D	■	L	A	C	T	I	C
A	W	O	L	■	I	T	O	■	O	R	S	O
N	E	A	L	■	A	H	A	■	R	U	M	S
E	D	D	Y	■	L	E	D	■	T	E	S	T

Yesterday's answer 1-4



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Michael Stipe, 48; Matt Frewer, 50; Patty Loveless, 51; Dyan Cannon, 71

Happy Birthday: You've got the potential to excel this year. Don't waste time worrying about failure. Just take action—anything less will take away from the final result. Trust in your ability to make things happen. The changes you bring about will be a confirmation you know what you are doing. Your numbers are 5, 13, 20, 24, 39, 47

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): You will be inclined to overreact or overspend. Set up a budget for the year and stick to it. Money can be made but hanging on to it will be the problem. A love relationship should be comforting. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Start working toward clearing your checklist. You've got a lot on your plate this year. Don't let someone you love cost you money. Now is the time to put an end to poor habits. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You will find yourself in an unusual position if you get involved with someone you know through work. Show restraint. Emotions will be difficult to control. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Don't make snap decisions regarding work or your vocation. You aren't likely to make a good decision if it is based on emotional feelings about something that happened between you and one of your peers. Uncertainty will prevail. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): A great opportunity will unfold if you network or take part in an industry event. This is a great time to attend a tradeshow or a conference or sign up for a lecture. Love is looking positive and some time scheduled in for a little romance will complete your day nicely. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Get out with friends or attend something that interests you. Sticking around home appears to be difficult, especially if you haven't been getting along with the people you live with or your neighbors. This may be a good time to look for a new place. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Take flight or get away for a vacation or a night out on the town. You need to stimulate your mind and nurture friendships or a love relationship. Travel, learning and interacting with others is what's required. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't cling to the past or fool yourself into thinking that things were better way back when. Be creative, daring and willing to jump headfirst into whatever comes along that is interesting. Don't turn down any opportunities. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't be so hard on the people who love you. You have to cut some slack once in a while, even if things aren't done precisely the way you want. Changes will occur that you least expect if you take someone for granted. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Give help but not cash donations. You will be far more effective if you teach others how to fend for themselves rather than do things for them or pay their way. Your involvement in an organization you believe in will pay off. 4 stars

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Your energy is high and, if you don't use it wisely, you may begin to get hyper and anxious about money and relationships. Activity, self-improvement projects or carrying out a new year's resolution should be your goal. ✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Avoid making erratic statements or changes at home or with loved ones. You should be spending time helping others or attending a function that will enable you to mingle with people who can influence your future. Don't let your pride stop you from getting ahead. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are influential and persuasive—a dreamer, dedicated to whatever cause you believe in. You are a crusader—a reactionary responsive to what's going on around you.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			8	5			7	
			4					1
					3	2		
8	4		1			6		
5				2				9
		7			8		5	2
		5	3					
9					6			
	2			1	9			

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 1/04

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

3	1	4	2	5	8	6	9	7
8	9	2	3	7	6	1	5	4
7	6	5	4	9	1	2	3	8
5	7	3	9	6	2	8	4	1
4	8	6	7	1	5	9	2	3
9	2	1	8	3	4	5	7	6
1	4	7	6	2	9	3	8	5
2	5	8	1	4	3	7	6	9
6	3	9	5	8	7	4	1	2

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/03

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

EYE CORRECTION SURGERY **Solution: 9 letters**

E	V	I	T	C	A	R	F	E	R	A	D	I	A	L
G	N	I	P	A	H	S	E	R	A	Y	S	C	A	N
M	S	I	G	H	T	C	A	T	A	R	A	C	T	E
A	O	U	S	L	O	O	T	N	R	E	T	I	N	A
R	D	D	R	T	R	P	N	E	P	R	A	H	S	A
E	R	V	E	F	N	E	L	M	G	L	A	R	E	S
D	A	S	A	R	A	E	S	T	S	N	R	Y	M	T
R	E	T	L	N	N	C	M	A	C	D	E	V	O	I
O	L	O	A	S	C	E	E	E	L	S	(I)	O	C	G
S	C	P	E	T	D	E	M	R	R	S	(R)	L	T	M
I	I	S	H	I	R	E	S	T	I	U	(I)	C	U	A
D	N	G	C	G	N	U	E	O	R	I	(S)	K	O	T
D	I	A	E	T	C	I	N	T	E	R	N	A	L	I
L	L	D	U	O	C	U	L	A	R	A	N	G	E	S
R	C	E	F	E	C	N	A	N	E	T	N	I	A	M

© 2008 Universal Press Syndicate www.wonderword.com 1/4

Advances, Astigmatism, Cataract, Clear, Clinic, Degree, Disorder, Enhancement, Eyes, Focus, Glare, Heal, Internal, Iris, Laser, Lenses, Lids, Light, Maintenance, Measurements, Medical, Modern, Ocular, Outcomes, Radial, Range, Rays, Refractive, Reshaping, Retina, Risk, Scan, Sharpen, Sight, Spots, Surface, Tools, Treatment, Vision

Yesterday's Answer: Uncover

SALE: The topics of "Wonderword for Kids" appeal to younger fans but the puzzle-difficulty matches what you've come to expect from Wonderword. For a limited time, the book is on sale for just $4 each (U.S. funds only), payable to Universal Press Syndicate. Include $3 postage for the first book order, $1 p&h for each additional book. Send to Wonderword, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free, 1-800-255-5734, ext. 6688. **Sorry,** no online orders for this special offer.

CLASSIFIED ADS

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	$25
• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

As added service to our valued customers, you may now submit all your JVA placements for announcement/publication in *Saipan Tribune's* print and online edition and KZMI/KCNM at the same time. No more worries of having to go to two different locations every time you need to place job vacancy announcements. Special rates are available for JVA customers under this arrangement.

Print*	
• 1st position	$10
• 2nd position	$3
• Succeeding positions	$1

LOWER RATES! Effective Feb. 3, 2007

Combo (Print and Online)*	
• 1st position	$13
• 2nd position	$4
• Succeeding positions	$2

Radio (KCNM/KZMI)	
• Up to 6 positions	$5
• More than 6 positions	$10

*These rates apply to all vacancy announcements that include corresponding benefits and which announcements are all under the same company name.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.
- KCNM/KZMI: All ads placed on Friday (9am to 5pm) will be for Monday's radio announcement.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

FOR RENT RESIDENTIAL

Apartment room for rent: Fully furnished 1 brm, T/B, 24-hr water $210/month, near Conwood | Tel. 287-1372, 235-6748

FOR RENT RESIDENTIAL

2 br apartment w/ laundry facility. Beach Rd., Chalan Laulau. Behind former Hakubotan bldg. Close to beach walking path. Call 483-1974.

BUSH CUTTER REPAIR LAWN MOWER

233-5641 Open 7 Day a Week 9:00 AM-9:00 PM

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

3 BEAUTICIAN (ST 7223)
Salary:$3.05-$4.00/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Maria Theresa Acosta-Yumul dba Hairspectations Salon @233-4248.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (F 13216)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/monthly housing charge; $100.00/monthly food charge & medical benefits. Contact: Reynaldo E. Cabaltica dba Private Household @235-0670.

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1 CARGO AGENT (F 13217)
Salary:$3.05-$4.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Consol. Trans. Serv. Inc. @322-1690 (L. Base)/234-2808 (Air)

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2 CONSTRUCTION HELPER (F 13218)
Salary:$3.55-$4.05/hour. Benefits: Medical & workmen compensation. Contact: YCO Corp. dba YCO TrueValue Hardware/Do It Best Hardware/Liberty Dept. Store/YCO Construction/Appliance Outlets/Liberty Dept. Store/Naked Fish Bar & Grill/Servistar Motorsports @ 233-3112/3.

4 CARPENTER (F 13219)
Salary:$3.55-$4.05/hour. Contact: YCO Corp. dba YCO TrueValue Hardware/Do It Best Hardware/Liberty Dept. Store/YCO Construction/Appliance Outlets/Liberty Dept. Store/Naked Fish Bar & Grill/Servistar Motorsports @ 233-3112/3.

WHATZIT Solution:
Pie in the sky

2 STEEL WORKER (F 13220)
Salary:$3.55-$4.05/hour. Contact: YCO Corp. dba YCO TrueValue Hardware/Do It Best Hardware/Liberty Dept. Store/YCO Construction/Appliance Outlets/Liberty Dept. Store/Naked Fish Bar & Grill/Servistar Motorsports @ 233-3112/3.

4 MASON (F 13221)
Salary:$3.55-$4.05/hour. Contact: YCO Corp. dba YCO TrueValue Hardware/Do It Best Hardware/Liberty Dept. Store/YCO Construction/Appliance Outlets/Liberty Dept. Store/Naked Fish Bar & Grill/Servistar Motorsports @ 233-3112/3.

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1 COMPUTER (SERVICE) TECHNICIAN (F 13222)
Salary:$6.45/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing monthly allowance; workers compensation & insurance. Contact: Bank of Saipan @235-6261.

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1 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT (F 13223)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Manju P. Hom dba Java Joes @287-9023.

NURSING ASSISTANTS NORTH CAROLINA, USA

Interview date: 1/15 & 1/16/08 at Century Hotel, Saipan
Requirement: High School education; US citizenship or residency; certification or experience a plus. Training will be given to those who qualify.
Offer: Full time employment; certification training provided, airfare to North Carolina, first month housing plus other benefits.
To apply or register for the interview contact:

World Health Resources, Inc.
www.whrgroup.com;
(201) 662-8907, (800) 742-2446
Or fax resume to (201) 662-9644.
Email: info@whrgroup.com.

Marianas Maid Services
Are you overwhelmed at work?
Has taking care of your kids and the housework become a burden?
LET US MAKE YOUR HOME OR OFFICE
*****SPARKLE*****
Cleaning services starting as low as $30 per cleaning.
All equipment and cleaning supplies provided.
All our staff has been hand picked and are reliable.
Ironing, Laundry, Window washing and many other services available upon request.
Contact Julie at 287-6542 to schedule an appointment.

SAIPAN WORLD CORP. dba:
ISLAND TELECOMM. & ELECTRICAL SERVICES
P.O. Box 502273 • Tel. (670) 235-6511/483-0055
E-mail:joleeco@pticom.com
SERVICES OFFERED:
- In house Wiring and Re-wiring for Telephone, Electrical and DSL Lines.
- Trouble Shooting and Repair
- Installation, Relocation and Programming of Telephone System (KSU) such as Meridian/Norstar and Intertel Phone System
- Category 5e Inside Wiring Cable merchandise.

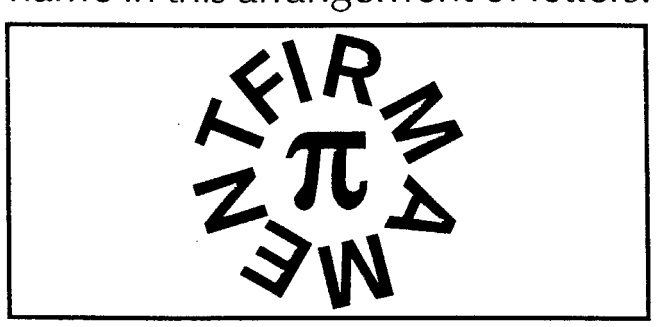
If you are looking for the services above, please call us and we're ready to serve you.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO VOLUNTARY DISSOLVE A CORPORATION

Notice is hereby given that a Notice of Intent to Dissolve **TUCKERS CORPORATION**, a corporation which is registered in Saipan has been delivered to the Department of Commerce Office of the Registrar of Corporations.

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



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Find today's solution in this section

VEHICLE FOR SALE

1996 TOYOTA CAMRY

For more information, please contact the Bank of Guam credit Department at telephone number (670) 233-5000 extension 205, 206, 207 and 208.
Bids will be closed on
Friday, January 4, 2008
at **6:00 p.m.**

The Bank reserves the right to reject any or all offers.

BANK OF GUAM
THE PEOPLE'S BANK
Member FDIC

P.O. Box 500678, Saipan MP 96950

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 AUDITOR (EXPERIENCED SENIOR) (F 13224)
Salary:$19.71/hour. Benefits: Self housing; self food; workers compensation & health insurance. Contact: Deloitte & Touche LLC @322-7337.

1 AUDITOR (EXPERIENCED SENIOR) (F 13225)
Salary:$19.71/hour. Benefits: Self housing; self food; workers compensation & health insurance. Contact: Deloitte & Touche LLC @322-7337.

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1 (ASSISTANT) GENERAL MANAGER (F 13226)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Medical expenses & workers compensation company provided. Contact: T&T Sakura Corporation @235-8303.

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1 COOK (F 13227)
Salary:$4.05-$4.55/hour. Benefits: Company provided housing; workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Nippon General Trading Corp. @233-8223.

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1 MANAGER (F 13228)
Salary:$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Sanki Company Ltd. @323-0018.

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1 ADMIN. ASSISTANT (F 13229)
Salary:$3.55-$4.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; provide own food; workmen compensation & medical covered. Contact: Coca-Cola Beverage (Micronesia) @235-2653.

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2 WAITER/WAITRESS (F 13230)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical benefits. Contact: William Albert Mott Jr. dba Club Billy Bones @285-2488/234-3647.

1 BARTENDER (F 13231)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical benefits. Contact: William Albert Mott Jr. dba Club Billy Bones @285-2488/234-3647.

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1 FLORIST (F 13232)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Sae Woun Corporation dba Paradise Florist @233-9875.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (F 13233)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provide food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Frances Pinaula @322-3090.

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1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (F 13234)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers medical & compensation provided. Contact: Ming Li Corporation dba Ming Li Store @234-2150.

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1 MASON (F 13235)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workmen's compensation & medical expenses provided by the company. Contact: G.C.G. & Company, Inc. @322-7166.

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1 (ENGLISH) TRANSLATOR (F 13236)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Provided housing; self food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Yin Jia Corporation dba Embroidery @288-1918.

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1 HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR (F 13237)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: ASC Arch Structure Corporation dba ASC Construction @235-8948.

1 CARPENTER (F 13238)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: ASC Arch Structure Corporation dba ASC Construction @235-8948.

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1 MAINT. BUILDING REPAIRER (F 13239)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical expense & workers compensation. Contact: Yaong Corporation @235-8727.

1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (F 13240)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical expense & workers compensation. Contact: Yaong Corporation @235-8727.

1 ACCOUNTANT (F 13241)
Salary:$3.55-$3.70/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical expense & workers compensation. Contact: Yaong Corporation @235-8727.

1 CARPENTER (F 13242)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical expense & workers compensation. Contact: Yaong Corporation @235-8727.

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1 COMPUTER SYSTEM ANALYST (F 13243)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Duties: Analyzes user requirement, procedure and problems to automotive processing or improve existing computer system. Reviews computer system capabilities, workflow and scheduling limitations to determine if requested program change is possible within the existing system. Must have knowledge in RealWorld. Acctg. Softwire & Synchronics POS. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Saipan Computer Services Inc. @234-9110.

1 LABORATORY TECHNICIAN (F 13244)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Duties: Conducts chemical and physical laboratory tests of solid materials, liquids, and gases, and analyzes test data for variety of purposes, such as research product development, quality control, criminal investigation, and establishing standards, involving experimental, theoretical, or practical application of chemistry and related sciences: Sets up laboratory equipment and instrumentation required for tests, research, or process, control. Tests and analyzes products, such as food, drugs, fertilizers, plastics, paints, detergents, paper, petroleum, and cement, to determine strength, stability, purity, chemical content, and other characteristics. Tests and analyzes materials and substances, such as ores, minerals, gases, soil, water, and pollutants. Documents results of tests and analyses. May prepare chemical solutions for use in processing materials, following standardized formulas or experimental procedures. May test and analyze radioactive and biological materials, applying knowledge of radiochemical procedures, emission spectrometry, and related techniques. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Quality Water Inc. @233-8002.

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1 COMPUTER TECHNICIAN (F 13245)
Salary:$660.00-$1,000.00/monthly. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Saipan Computer Services Inc. @234-9110.

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1 HOUSEWORKER (F 13246)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing deductible; $100.00/food deductible; workers compensation & medical benefits. Contact: Luis/Tomasa Camacho @322-5504.

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1 BLDG. MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (F 13247)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Mu Sung Corporation @288-1363.

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1 OFFICE MANAGER (F 13248)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical & workmen's compensation provided by employer. Contact: Diving Shop Light House, Inc. @256-5473.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (F 13249)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical & workmen's compensation provided by employer. Contact: Dark Horse Corporation @234-5274.

1 GENERAL SUPERVISOR (F 13250)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; medical & workmen's compensation provided by employer. Contact: Dark Horse Corporation @234-5274.

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1 GENERAL CLERK (F 13251)
Salary:$4.05/hour. Benefits: Employee provided housing; workman's compensation; health insurance & 40 hrs paid sick leave per annum. Contact: Health Professional Corporation dba Saipan Health Clinic @234-2901.

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1 LIVE IN MAID (F 13252)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/charge housing monthly; $100.00/charge food monthly & medical. Contact: Geraldine Cruz @287-5770.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (F 13253)
Salary:$3.55-$9.50/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation; life insurance & 80% company share on medical premium. Contact: Saipan Shipping Company, Inc. @322-9706/07.

1 (ACCOUNTING) MANAGER (F 13254)
Salary:$1,000.00-$2,600.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation insurance; life insurance & 80% company share on medical premium. Transportation provided to & from work. Contact: Saipan Shipping Company, Inc. @322-9706/07.

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1 CARPENTER (F 13255)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical re-imbursable & workers compensation insurance. Contact: B&P Inc. dba B&P Smart Furniture @234-9357.

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1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (F 13256)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: J. Lee Development Corp. @322-6290.

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1 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT (F 13257)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employee self housing; employee self food; free medical & worker compensation. Contact: Royal Supplies Inc. @288-3388.

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1 (BOAT FISHING) DECKHAND (F 13258)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workman's compensation. Contact: L.I.F.E. Inc. @234-3533/233-0533.

---

1 SUPERVISOR (FOUNTAIN SERVER) (F 13259)
Salary:$3.55-$4.50/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: 3's Inc. dba Hula Girl @234-3533.

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1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (F 13260)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; employee provided food; medical expense & workers compensation. Contact: Henry E. Elayda dba Henry Store @235-9582.

Notice of Zoning Board Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Zoning Board will be held on Thursday, January 10, 2008 at 6:00 pm. in the 2nd floor Conference Room of the Department of Public Lands, Joeten Building, DanDan. The public is invited to attend. The agenda will include:

A. Preliminary Matters: Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes, Communications
B. Reports: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Administrator, Committees, Legal Counsel
C. Contested Cases
D. Old Business
1. Report of action on the Saipan Zoning Law of 2007
2. Approve for publication proposed regulations regarding: site plans, fees, public notice, and hearing procedure
3. Review and approve annual reports to the Legislature and to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
4. Discuss Zoning Office work priorities

E. New Business
1. Review and approve changes to the OIA grant scope of work and budget

F. Public Comment
G. Executive (Closed) Session - Consult with Legal Counsel regarding pending or anticipated legal matters
H. Miscellaneous: Other Matters, Announcements, Next Meeting. Adjourn

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the Board meeting, or if you require assistance, please contact Steve Tilley, Zoning Administrator at 234-9663. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & 10 CMC 3511, et seq.). /s/ Henry S. Hofschneider, Chair.

Training on the Saipan Zoning Law

The Zoning Office invites the public to training about the Saipan Zoning Law of 2007 that will go into effect on February 1, 2008. A special invitation is extended to those who plan to: build a new commercial or residential structure; repair or expand an existing structure; move a business into a new or existing building; maintain an existing sign or make a new one; continue or start an adult business; subdivide property; start a home business; or continue operating or maintaining an existing use, structure, or sign that would not be allowed under the law.

Place: Multipurpose Center, Susupe
Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2008

Session Times and Topics:

8:30 am – 11:30 am	Detailed presentation for developers, engineers, architects, businesses, government agencies
1:30 – 2:45 pm	Presentation for adult businesses
3:00 – 4:45 pm	Presentation on signs – repair of old signs and construction of new ones
6:30 – 8:30 pm	Overview for the general public

Those wishing to attend should call the Zoning Office at 234-9663/7 or e-mail to staff@zoning.gov.mp. Attendees should bring a copy of the law to the training session for reference. Copies of the law and maps can be downloaded from www.zoning.gov.mp. The Zoning Office also has copies for sale for $5.00 at the 2nd floor, Joeten Building, DanDan. Call 234-9663/7 for more information.

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Saipan Tribune
'Many still oppose federalization'

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
State Board of Education
Public School System
P. O. Box 501370, Saipan, MP 96950

Invitation For Bid
IFB 08-011

The Public School System (PSS) and the CNMI State Board of Education are soliciting competitive sealed bids for the purchase, delivery, and installation of **Desktop Computers & Accessories for Saipan Southern High School.**

Detailed information on the Scope of Work is available at the PSS Procurement & Supply Office located on the 3rd floor of the NMI Retirement Fund Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950.

All bids must be placed in a sealed envelope face marked "IFB 08-011" containing one (1) original and three (3) copies and shall be submitted to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office no later than January 23, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. Responsibility determination documents shall be placed in separate envelope marked "IFB 08-011, CONFIDENTIAL - Responsibility determination" (1-original and 1-copy). Any bid after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstance.

Technical questions must be in writing and addressed to Mr. Carl de la Cruz, Acting Procurement & Supply Officer via fax # (670) 664-3791. Alternatively, technical questions may be emailed to the following address: delacruzc@pss.cnmi.mp. Questions shall be submitted no later than ten (10) working days prior to the submission deadline.

The Public School System reserves the right to award single or multiple awards or to reject any or all bids if to do so is in the best interest of the Public School System.

All bids shall become the property of the Public School System.

General inquiries to this announcement may be directed to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office at telephone numbers 237-3062 / 3035.

/S/ Dr. David M. Borja, D.B.A.
Commissioner of Education

/S/ Carl F. de la Cruz, M.B.A.
Acting P&S Officer

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
State Board of Education
Public School System
P.O. Box 501370, Saipan, MP 96950

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP 08-012

The Public School System and the CNMI State Board of Education are soliciting competitive sealed proposals for the **Repair and Servicing of the Fire Alarm Simplex System** at various public schools. Detailed information on the Scope of Work is available at the PSS Procurement & Supply Office located on the 3rd floor of the NMI Retirement Fund Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950.

All proposals shall be in a sealed envelope face marked "RFP 08-012" containing (1) original and three (3) copies and submitted to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office no later than January 23, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. Responsibility Determination documents shall be placed in a separate envelope marked "RFP 08-012, CONFIDENTIAL - Responsibility Determination" (1-original and one copy). Any bid after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstance.

A pre-submission conference will be held at the PSS Capital Improvement Projects Office on January 10, 2007 at 10:00 a.m.

Technical questions shall be in writing and addressed to Mr. Carl de la Cruz, Acting Procurement & Supply Officer, via fax # (670) 664-3791. Alternatively, questions may be e-mailed to the following address: delacruzc@pss.cnmi.mp.

Contractors are required to submit with their proposal, a copy of their valid CNMI Business License.

The Public School System reserves the right to award single or multiple awards or to reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, if to do so is in the best interest of the Public School System.

All proposals shall become the property of the Public School System.

/S/ Dr. David M. Borja, D.B.A.
Commissioner of Education

/S/ Carl de la Cruz, M.B.A.
Acting P & S Officer

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
State Board of Education
Public School System
P. O. Box 501370, Saipan, MP 96950

Request for Proposal
RFP 08-011

The Public School System and the CNMI State Board of Education are soliciting competitive sealed proposals for the **Preventative Maintenance, Repair, Parts Supply and General Automotive Services for the Public School System Bus and Vehicle Fleets**. Detailed information on the Scope of Work is available at the PSS Procurement & Supply Office located on the 3rd floor of the NMI Retirement Fund Building, Capitol Hill,, Saipan, MP 96950.

All proposals shall be in a sealed envelope face marked "RFP 08-011" containing one (1) original and three (3) copies and submitted to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office no later than February 6, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. Responsibility Determination documents shall be placed in a separate envelope marked "RFP 08-011, CONFIDENTIAL - Responsibility Determination" (1-original and one copy). Any bid after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstance.

Technical questions shall be in writing and addressed to Mr. Carl de la Cruz, Acting Procurement & Supply Officer, via fax # (670) 664-3791. Alternatively, questions may be e-mailed to the following address: **delacruzc@pss.cnmi.mp**.

Contractors are required to submit with their proposal, a copy of their valid CNMI Business License.

The Public School System reserves the right to award single or multiple awards, to split awards, or to reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, if to do so is in the best interest of the Public School System.

All proposals shall become the property of the Public School System.

/S/ Dr. David M. Borja, D.B.A.
Commissioner of Education

/S/ Carl F. de la Cruz, M.B.A.
Acting P&S Officer

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
State Board of Education
Public School System
P. O. Box 501370, Saipan, MP 96950

Invitation For Bid
IFB 08-012

The CNMI Public School System (PSS) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for **Security Services for all Public School Campuses and PSS Properties located in the CNMI.** Detailed information on the Scope of Work is available at the PSS Procurement & Supply Office located on the 3rd floor of the NMI Retirement Fund Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950.

All bids must be placed in a sealed envelope face marked "IFB 08-012" containing one (1) original and three (3) copies and shall be submitted to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office no later than February 4, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. Responsibility determination documents shall be placed in separate envelope marked "IFB 08-012, CONFIDENTIAL - Responsibility determination" (1-original and 1-copy). Any bid after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstance.

Technical questions must be in writing and addressed to Mr. Carl de la Cruz, Acting Procurement & Supply Officer via fax # (670) 664-3791. Alternatively, questions may be emailed to the following address: **delacruzc@pss.cnmi.mp**. Questions shall be submitted no later than ten (10) calendar days prior to the deadline for submission of bids.

General inquiries to this announcement may be directed to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office at telephone numbers 237-3062 / 3035.

The Public School System reserves the right to award single or multiple awards or to reject any or all bids, in whole or in part, if to do so is in the best interest of the Public School System.

All bids shall become the property of the Public School System.

/S/ Dr. David M. Borja, D.B.A.
Commissioner of Education

/S/ Carl F. de la Cruz, M.B.A.
Acting P&S Officer

Mountaineers slam Sooners in Fiesta Bowl

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP)—Rich who? The West Virginia Mountaineers didn't need coach Rich Rodriguez. They had Pat White, and their elusive quarterback led them to a surprising 48-28 romp over No. 3 Oklahoma in the Fiesta Bowl on Wednesday night.

White ran for 150 yards and threw for 176 and two touchdowns for the 11th-ranked Mountaineers, who rushed for 349 yards, most allowed by Oklahoma in a bowl game.

Since arriving in the desert last week, the Mountaineers (11-2) said they had bonded behind interim coach Bill Stewart, who took over when Rodriguez bolted for Michigan in mid-December. And they vowed to rebound from a 13-9 loss to Pitt that knocked them out of the Bowl Championship Series title game.

The Mountaineers were right on both counts, turning in an emotional effort and overcoming the loss of star tailback Steve Slaton to a first-quarter leg injury. Noel Devine replaced Slaton and ran for 108 yards and two touchdowns—a 17-yarder and a 65-yarder that clinched the game in the fourth quarter.

The Mountaineers became the first of six teams to win under an interim coach in this bowl season. They improved to 2-0 in the Bowl Championship Series.

"It's a great night to be a Mountaineer," Stewart said as he accepted the Fiesta Bowl trophy as thousands of West Virginia fans celebrated in the grandstand.

Stewart said his players "never, ever quit believing."

Oklahoma (11-3) endured another disappointment on the same field where the Sooners lost a classic Fiesta Bowl to Boise State one year ago. The Sooners have dropped four straight BCS games.

The Sooners had no answer for White, whose 79-yard touchdown pass to Tito Gonzales in the fourth quarter was the longest in Mountaineers bowl history.

The Mountaineers' fourth-rated defense limited the potent Sooners to well below their scoring average of 43.4 points per game, third in the nation.

The Mountaineers harassed Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford, sacking the nation's top-rated passer three times and intercepting him in the end zone. Bradford completed 21 of 33 passes for 242 yards and two touchdowns.

The Sooners rallied from an 18-point deficit against Boise State last January.

This time, they trailed 20-6 at halftime. But they cut it to 20-15 on Chris Brown's 1-yard run midway through the third quarter.

Then Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops made two curious calls. First, he decided to go for two points. But Bradford's pass fell incomplete.

AP

West Virginia's Dorrell Jalloh, left, celebrates with Darius Reynaud (2) after Reynaud scored a touchdown in the second quarter of the Fiesta Bowl college football game against Oklahoma, Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008 in Glendale, Ariz.

Then Stoops ordered an onside kick. The ball didn't go 10 yards, and West Virginia took over on OU's 39.

The Mountaineers needed six plays to capitalize, scoring on Devine's 17-yard run.

West Virginia made it 34-15 on Darius Reynaud's 30-yard run with 20 seconds to go in the third quarter. The Mountaineers went 75 yards in three plays - 42 on an electrifying run by White, who weaved through tacklers along the left sideline.

After the Sooners scored on a 19-yard pass from Bradford to Quentin Chaney, White found Gonzales down the middle for a 79-yard TD that made it 41-21.

After one quarter, the Sooners had 1 yard on 12 plays. At halftime they had as many penalties (six) as first downs.

The Mountaineers took command in the second quarter.

Fullback Owen Schmitt broke a career-long 57-yard touchdown run to put the Mountaineers ahead 13-3 midway through the quarter. The 260-pound Schmitt shrugged off a tackle by 197-pound safety Darien Williams, wheeled around the end and sprinted down the right sideline for the score.

Schmitt saves some of his best runs for bowl games. He also broke runs of 52 yards in the 2007 Gator Bowl and 54 in the 2006 Sugar.

Four minutes later, West Virginia made it 20-6 when White froze the Sooners with a play-fake and hit a wide-open Reynaud for a 21-yard touchdown. It was Reynaud's 12th touchdown catch this season, matching Chris Henry's school record set in 2004.

The Mountaineers jumped ahead 3-0 on a 38-yard field goal by Pat McAfee midway through the first quarter. McAfee added a 42-yarder in the final seconds of the period to put West Virginia up 6-0.

Oklahoma's first scoring drive covered 54 yards, and the Sooners needed a pair of 15-yard West Virginia penalties—on the same play—to set up a 37-yard field goal by Garrett Hartley.

Torre won't pick sides in Clemens drama

NEW YORK (AP)—Joe Torre won't pick sides between Roger Clemens and Brian McNamee, the former New York Yankees strength coach who accused the Rocket of using performance-enhancing drugs.

"You're not going to get me in that jackpot," the former Yankees manager said Wednesday. "I'd rather just stay away from making any in-depth comment about the whole steroid-HGH thing."

Torre, who managed Clemens for six seasons, spoke during a Golf Channel conference call ahead of the Mercedes-Benz Championship in Kapalua, Hawaii, where he will be honorary starter.

In George Mitchell's report last month on performance-enhancing drugs in baseball, McNamee claimed Clemens used steroids and Human Growth Hormone and accused Andy Pettitte of using HGH. Clemens denied the charge, while Pettitte admitted using HGH on two occasions while rehabbing an injury.

"I'm very close to Roger. When I say close to him, he was a great competitor for me. Andy the same way. And I certainly know they're two proud individuals that only like to do the right thing," Torre said. "I'd just like to leave it at that."

AP

Los Angeles Dodgers manager Joe Torre gestures while speaking to an audience at the Samsung Experience in this Nov. 14, 2007 file photo in New York.

Torre managed the Yankees for 12 seasons, winning the World Series four times in his first five years, before leaving at the end of last season and becoming manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

A total of 20 current and former Yankees were identified in Mitchell's report. Torre said the high total likely was due to two of Mitchell's primary sources being from the New York area: McNamee and former Mets clubhouse attendant Kirk Radomski.

"It made it look like a lopsided report," Torre said. "Plus, don't forget, the Yankees have so many people coming through there on a year-to-year basis. We changed over quite often, whether it would be a player for the month of May, a player for the month of September. But I think the big part of it was the access, where these two people were both based in New York."

Torre suspects use may have been more widespread.

"When you're talking about 80 players that supposedly were using one thing or another, to me it may be an incomplete report," he said. "The only thing I do know is that the most important thing for us in baseball is to make sure that when we take the field, that the fans trust us. So whatever we have to do to make that happen, I think that's important."

Clemens, who issued a video denial of McNamee's accusations, is due to appear on CBS's "60 Minutes" on Sunday and hold a news conference the following day in the Houston area.

Torre, who spends much of the offseason in Hawaii, joked about his golf game, calling it "ugly." The former catcher, who limped when he made trips to the mound last season, had a knee replaced last month.

"The knee is four weeks old today and it's OK," he said. "It's just a little achy, that's all."

MLB BRIEFS

Reed Johnson, Jays agree at $3.275M

TORONTO (AP)—Outfielder Reed Johnson and the Toronto Blue Jays agreed Wednesday to a one-year contract worth $3,275,000. The 31-year-old hit .236 with two homers and 14 RBIs last season, which was cut short in April because of a herniated disk. Johnson is a .281 hitter with 42 homers and 234 RBIs in five seasons with the Blue Jays. Toronto also agreed to minor league contracts with right-hander Lance Carter, and left-handers John Parrish and Ryan Ketchner. Carter was 3-5 with a 4.48 ERA last year with Orix of Japan's Pacific League, and Parrish went a combined 2-2 with a 5.72 ERA for Baltimore and Seattle. Ketchner was 1-11 with a 5.62 ERA at Triple-A Portland, a San Diego farm team.

Orioles get Roberson from Phillies

BALTIMORE (AP)—Outfielder Chris Roberson was purchased by the Baltimore Orioles from the Philadelphia Phillies on Wednesday. The 28-year-old hit .286 (8-for-28) in two stints with the Phillies last year and batted .266 in 113 games for Triple-A Ottawa, playing primarily in center field. A ninth-round pick in the 2001 amateur draft, Roberson made his major league debut in 2006. To make room for Roberson on the 40-man roster, Baltimore designated outfielder Jeff Fiorentino for assignment. Philadelphia also sent catcher Pete Laforest outright to Triple-A Lehigh Valley.

KC signs Tsao to minor league deal

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—The Kansas City Royals on Monday signed right-handed pitcher Chin-Hui Tsao to a minor league contract and invited him to spring training. Tsao, 26, was hampered last season with a shoulder injury, making 21 relief appearances for the Los Angeles Dodgers for a 0-1 record with a 4.38 ERA. Tsao had an operation in May 2005 to repair a torn labrum and missed all of the 2006 season for the Colorado Rockies. In Tsao's four-year career with the Dodgers and Rockies, he has a 4-4 record with a 5.40 ERA in 50 games. The 6-foot-1, 210-pound right-hander began the 2007 season with Triple-A Las Vegas in the Dodgers system before being recalled by Los Angeles in April. Tsao has pitched for his native Taiwan in five major international competitions, including the 2004 Olympics in Athens.

Vikes' Peterson is top offensive rookie

NEW YORK (AP)—Adrian Peterson is impressed. Not so much by his achievements as he ran away with The Associated Press NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year voting the same way he surged past opposing tacklers this season. What has gotten the attention of the Minnesota Vikings running back is the company he keeps.

"It's a great honor to join a list with names like those," Peterson said Wednesday when told that Jim Brown, Emmitt Smith, Eric Dickerson and Billy Sims also won the award. "They are guys that I looked up to growing up. It's a goal that I set before the year started, to win rookie of the year, so it feels great to accomplish that."

Peterson, who set the league mark for rushing in a game with 296 yards in a 35-17 victory over San Diego, also had a 224-yarder in a win against Chicago. The key to Minnesota's improvement to an 8-8 record this season, he led the NFC with 1,341 yards rushing, second only to San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson in the league. His 78 points on 13 touchdowns were second in the conference.

Those numbers, compiled in 14 games, and his overall impact—the Vikings struggled to pass the ball, yet were in the wild-card race until the final game—earned Peterson 46 1/2 votes Wednesday from a nationwide panel of 50 media members who regularly cover the NFL. Cleveland tackle Joe Thomas was the only other player receiving votes, 3 1/2.

"I added to things they already had," Peterson said. "I am a playmaker. That's why I say if there is anything I could do to put me out there, just put me out there.

"I wanted to come in and be a difference and help the team turn around. I came with the attitude to do whatever I had to do to get on the field."

Peterson was not a starter until the sixth game, a week after his big performance against the Bears. While veteran Chester Taylor opened the first five games and was coming off a strong year, it was clear that Peterson could be a difference-maker.

So coach Brad Childress had to turn him loose.

"From an early time, a week after the draft when we had about 50 free agents in here, you knew he was going to be a special guy," Childress said.

The seventh selection in the draft, Peterson brought some durability issues with him after suffering several injuries at Oklahoma. He did miss two games with a knee problem and wasn't particularly effective for much of December when he returned to the lineup.

But at his best, Peterson was as good as any rookie runner the league has seen; halfway through the schedule, he was on pace to break Eric Dickerson's rookie rushing record of 1,808 yards.

And even though he slowed because of the injury, Peterson had little competition for the award.

"I knew what I was bringing to the table. I'm pretty sure those guys knew by drafting me," Peterson said. "I came in with the attitude to just contribute any way I could. Get in game shape and be valuable to play."

Vikings cornerback Cedric Griffin played at Texas and faced Peterson each season. That Peterson was the NFL's top offensive rookie was no surprise to Griffin.

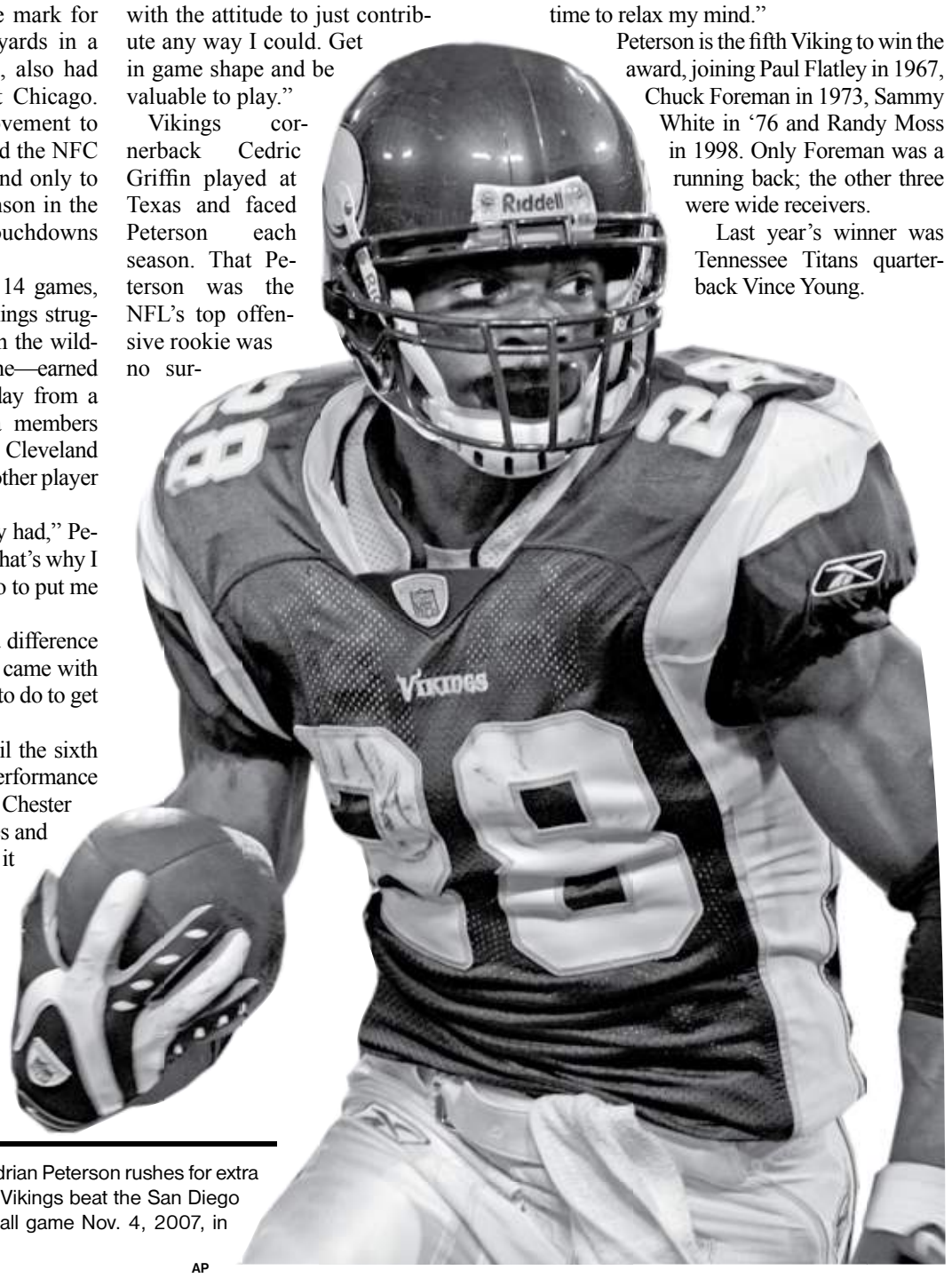
"I knew what he possessed. He's just a great back, and I respect that of him," Griffin said. "I don't think he needs any praises, because he knows that he has that capability of carrying this team. He's been doing a great job, and everyone knows that."

Now, Peterson is ready for some R&R. Sure, he'd prefer being in the postseason, but with the Vikings eliminated, there's nothing wrong with some time to recharge.

"I got to get away and just relax," he said. "It feels like I've been on a world tour for so long since I started playing in the league. But this is what it's all about. This is what you dream about when you were little. But it's definitely going to feel good to get some time to relax my mind."

Peterson is the fifth Viking to win the award, joining Paul Flatley in 1967, Chuck Foreman in 1973, Sammy White in '76 and Randy Moss in 1998. Only Foreman was a running back; the other three were wide receivers.

Last year's winner was Tennessee Titans quarterback Vince Young.



Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson rushes for extra yardage in the first quarter as the Vikings beat the San Diego Chargers, 35-17, in an NFL football game Nov. 4, 2007, in this file photo from Minneapolis.

AP

NFL BRIEFS

Young practices, but Titans lose Scaife

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Titans quarterback Vince Young practiced on a limited basis Wednesday but lost one of his favorite targets when tight end Bo Scaife was placed on injured reserve with a lacerated liver. Scaife won't be available for the playoffs. Tennessee plays at San Diego in the first round Sunday, and Young hopes to start despite a sore right quadriceps. The team's third-leading receiver with a career-high 46 catches for 421 yards, Scaife was hurt during Tennessee's 16-10 win over Indianapolis on Sunday night. He was trying to catch a high pass from Young when he was hit by Colts safety Matt Giordano in the second quarter. The ball bounced off Giordano's head, and Titans receiver Justin Gage caught it just before it hit the ground for a 21-yard completion. The tight end finished the game and returned with the Titans to Nashville. But coach Jeff Fisher said Scaife had a tough night, underwent some tests and was hospitalized on Monday. Scaife was released Wednesday morning but was placed on injured reserve and will need up to six weeks of rest to heal.

Bengals fire def. coordinator, LBs coach

CINCINNATI (AP)—The Cincinnati Bengals, saddled with a defense that again finished near the bottom of the league, fired defensive coordinator Chuck Bresnahan and linebackers coach Ricky Hunley on Wednesday. "These are very difficult decisions that affect the lives of coaches and their families," head coach Marvin Lewis said in a statement. "But after meeting with all our coaches, I determined that it was necessary to make these changes." The Bengals finished 7-9, the team's first losing season under Lewis. Bresnahan was with the Bengals for four seasons. He joined the team as an assistant coach in 2004 after serving as defensive coordinator for the Oakland Raiders. Bresnahan was defensive coordinator for the Bengals for the past three seasons. Hunley had been the Bengals' linebackers coach for the past five seasons.

49ers keep Nolan as coach, name new GM

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—After five straight losing seasons, the San Francisco 49ers still believe everything is going according to coach Mike Nolan's plan. Nolan will return to the 49ers next season despite going 16-32 in his first three years with the club. Scot McCloughan, their top personnel executive, was formally announced as general manager Wednesday, getting a contract extension and a raise. And other than those new business cards for McCloughan, 49ers owner John York apparently made no significant changes to his beleaguered franchise's power structure after the longest streak of losing football in team history. Nolan, who previously had the final say on all football decisions, and McCloughan will continue to make joint decisions on every issue for the 49ers (5-11), even though McCloughan now has "the trigger," as Nolan put it. "I will remain the one voice in this organization, and the face," Nolan said. "I don't believe it will change at all. The important thing is that we will maintain the relationship. We'll still communicate on all issues. ... I'm not disappointed at all. I was in favor of it. I've been in favor of it for a long time."

Reports: Detroit Lions fire Mike Martz

DETROIT (AP)—The Detroit Lions reportedly fired Mike Martz on Wednesday, ending his fractious two years as the team's offensive coordinator. Martz will be replaced by Jim Colletto, who will retain his position as offensive line coach while calling plays. Receivers coach Kippy Brown will serve as co-coordinator, the *Detroit Free Press*, Booth Newspapers and ESPN.com reported. A message seeking comment was left Wednesday with Martz's agent, Bob LaMonte. The Lions had no comment on the reports, a team spokesman said. Martz confirmed his firing to the *Free Press*. "We fell short of what we wanted to do offensively, and I regret that," he told the newspaper. The Lions were 7-9 this season after a 6-2 start. During two losing seasons in Detroit, Martz was unable to replicate the success he had during the "Greatest Show on Turf" years in St. Louis.

KC fires offensive coordinator, 3 others

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—The Kansas City Chiefs have fired offensive coordinator Mike Solari and three other assistant coaches following a 4-12 season. Solari, offensive line coach John Matsko, receivers coach Charlie Joiner and running backs coach James Saxon were let go Tuesday after a season in which the Chiefs were among the worst offensive teams in the NFL. Solari, Saxon and Joiner had been on the staff of previous coach Dick Vermeil. Tight ends coach Jon Embree and assistant head coach/quarterbacks coach Dick Curl were the only offensive assistants who were retained. Kansas City scored just 226 points, worst for a 16-game season in Chiefs history, and averaged 276.8 yards in total offense, second worst in the NFL behind San Francisco.

Dolphins hire Cowboys exec Ireland as GM

DAVIE, Fla. (AP)—Jeff Ireland has rejoined Bill Parcells to help revive the Miami Dolphins.

Ireland, who spent the past seven years in player personnel with the Dallas Cowboys, was hired Wednesday as Dolphins general manager. He replaces Randy Mueller, fired Monday after three seasons with Miami.

Parcells, the Cowboys' head coach in 2003-06, joined the Dolphins two weeks ago as executive vice president of football operations.

"Jeff Ireland certainly was an important part of this organization," said Parcells' successor in Dallas, Wade Phillips. "Miami has done a smart thing by hiring him. And Bill was around him, so he knew what he does."

Ireland may have input in deciding the fate of Cam Cameron, whose job is in jeopardy after going 1-15 in his first season as an NFL head coach. Cameron met Tuesday with Parcells, but remained uncertain whether he would be retained.

Ireland, 37, spent the past three years as Cowboys vice president of college and pro scouting, and he helped build the team that won the NFC East this season with a 13-3 record. Before that, he was an NFL scout for 11 years.

"I am excited about joining the Dolphins," Ireland said in a statement. "I know the great tradition of the team, and in my mind they are one of the flagship franchises in the NFL. They have a great owner in Wayne Huizenga, who I know is committed to making the Dolphins into winners once again. I am looking forward to working with him and everyone else in Miami to achieve that goal."

Huizenga flew by helicopter to the team's training complex to meet with Ireland and left two hours later, shortly before the hiring was announced.

Bad personnel decisions over the past decade are a major reason for the decline of the Dolphins, once a perennial playoff team. They're sitting out the postseason for the sixth year in a row, and only an overtime win against Baltimore last month prevented them from becoming the NFL's first 0-16 team.

While Ireland is a Texas native who played at Baylor, he decided to leave Dallas to become a general manager.

"The promotion, I think, was the key thing. I don't think he was going to be moved up to general manager here," Phillips said to laughter.

Team owner Jerry Jones holds that title with the Cowboys.

Hamilton leads Pistons to 10th straight

WASHINGTON (AP)—With Richard Hamilton leading the way, the Detroit Pistons are not only winning night in and night out, they're winning easily.

Hamilton's 20 points made him the 10th-leading scorer in franchise history, and he added nine assists and seven rebounds to help Detroit earn its 10th consecutive victory by beating the Washington Wizards 106-93 Wednesday night.

It's the Pistons' longest winning streak since an 11-gamer in January 2006, and the average margin of victory during the current run is 16.8 points.

How lopsided was this one? Detroit led by double digits throughout the second half.

The Wizards (15-15) were paced by Caron Butler's 22 points and Antawn Jamison's 21, but they again failed to defeat a top team. Washington's last victory over a club with a winning record came Dec. 1 against the Toronto Raptors.

The Pistons, meanwhile, are beating everyone. They improved to 25-7 overall, 17-2 against Eastern Conference opponents. Detroit coach Flip Saunders was honored Wednesday as the East's coach of the month after his club went 15-2 in December.

"You're happy," Saunders said before the game, "because it shows your team is playing at a high level—and they played at a high level for 30 days."

Hamilton's been a big part of that, and he now has led Detroit in scoring each of its past six games.

He entered Wednesday needing four points to pass Gene Shue on the Pistons' career scoring list and, surprisingly, didn't get there in the first quarter, shooting only 1-for-4. But the former Wizards player got going with 13 points in the second period.

A total of seven Pistons scored in double figures, including Rasheed Wallace—like Hamilton, a former Washington player—with 16 points and eight rebounds.

Detroit used a 10-0 run that began at the end of the second quarter and finished with consecutive 3-pointers by Chauncey Billups to open the third quarter, making it 63-47. That pretty much put an end to the competitive portion of the proceedings, with the Pistons leading by as many as 20.

The Pistons opened the second quarter with a 10-0 spurt to go up 36-27 on Rodney Stuckey's fast-break layup a little more than three minutes into the period. Washington got as close as four points only once the rest of the game, and the half ended with Detroit ahead 57-47.

The Wizards were led in the first half by 11 points from Antonio Daniels, who returned after missing seven games with a sprained right knee. He finished with 18 points and two assists in 36 minutes.

Celtics 97, Rockets 93

In Boston, the Celtics downed Houston to record a seventh consecutive victory.

Kevin Garnett scored 11 of his 26 points in the last seven minutes, adding nine rebounds.

The Celtics improved to 27-3, matching the best 30-game start in the shot-clock era. Five other teams have lost just three of their first 30 games, including Chicago in 1995-96, when it finished the season with an NBA-record 72 wins.

Cavaliers 98, Hawks 94

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 32 of his 36 points in the second half to lead Cleveland past Atlanta.

Larry Hughes, whose shooting woes have been an ongoing problem for Cleveland, made a crucial jumper with 2:33 left to put the Cavaliers ahead 85-82.

James took only five shots in the first half. But after 13 points in the third quarter, James scored 19 of Cleveland's 22 over the last 6:51.

Trail Blazers 90, Timberwolves 79

In Minneapolis, Portland beat a woeful Minnesota to record its 14th victory in 15 games.

Brandon Roy scored 24 points for the Trail Blazers, who bounced back from a loss Monday that ended their 13-game winning streak—the NBA's longest this season.

The Timberwolves are a league-worst 4-27 and off to the poorest start in a franchise history that has known plenty of losing. Minnesota shot a season-low 35 percent from the field.

Mavericks 121, Warriors 99

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 29 points to lead Dallas past its nemesis Golden State, which was on its first tip to Dallas since last season's playoff upset.

Josh Howard added 19 points and 13 rebounds for the Mavericks, who are 2-0 against Golden State this season after going 1-6 over the past two seasons.

Nets 96, Magic 95

In Orlando, Florida, New Jersey overcame a 15-point deficit to beat Orlando.

Jason Kidd set two career milestones: his 9,000th assist and moving past Magic Johnson for fourth place on the career rebound list for guards.

The Nets trailed most of the game, but finally came back in the fourth quarter.

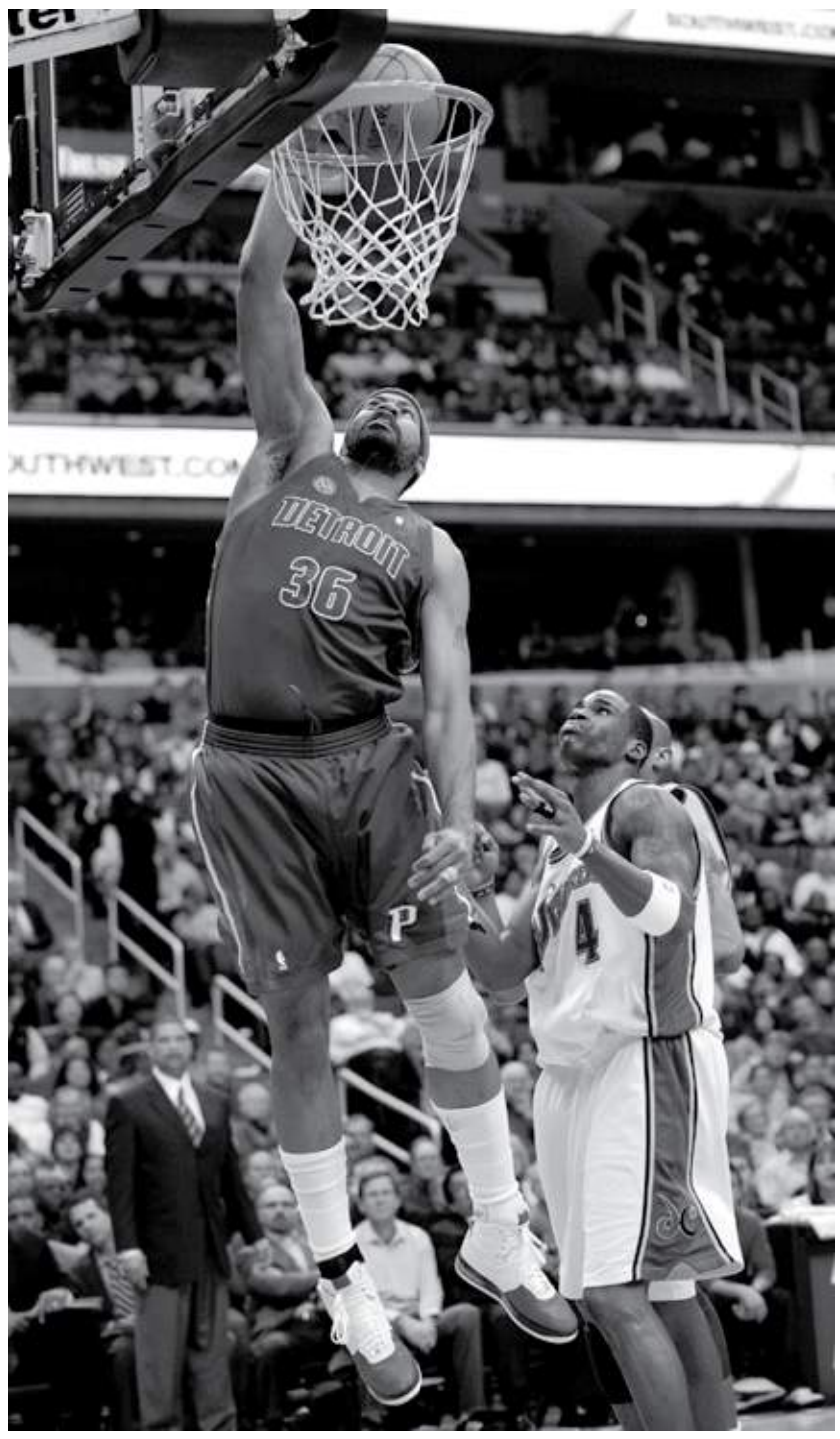
Hedo Turkoglu had two tries to put Orlando back in front with less than 30 seconds to go. He missed an off-balance jumper and then lost the ball while driving the lane with 12.9 seconds left.

Bulls 109, Bobcats 97

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Chicago continued its strong play under interim coach Jim Boylan to beat Charlotte.

Ben Gordon scored 22 points and Luol Deng added 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Bulls, who improved to 3-1 under Boylan and rallied from a 12-point third-quarter deficit when Boylan tweaked his rotation to take advantage of Charlotte's small lineup.

Boylan, the former Bulls assistant who took over from the fired Scott Skiles, has found success with a big lineup and Gordon now coming off the bench.



AP

Detroit Pistons' Rasheed Wallace (36) dunks over Washington Wizards' Antawn Jamison (4)during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008, in Washington.

Grizzlies 90, Pacers 72

In Indianapolis, Memphis beat Indiana to snap a five-game losing streak.

Pau Gasol had 30 points, 12 rebounds and shot 11-for-19 from the field for the Grizzlies to extend Indiana's losing streak to five. It was Memphis' first win at Conseco Fieldhouse.

The Pacers shot a season-low 31 percent and failed to score at least 90 points for the first time in 25 games.

Bucks 103, Heat 98

In Miami, Mo Williams reminded Miami why it wanted him during the offseason, scoring 25 points with nine assists for Milwaukee.

The Bucks snapped a four-game skid and posted just their third road win.

Milwaukee lost its previous nine games on the road by an average of 15.4 points, and was coming off a 45-point drubbing in Detroit on New Year's Eve.

The Heat have lost five straight.

Kings 107, Knicks 97

In New York, Sacramento shook off more bad injury news to beat New York, snapping a four-game losing streak.

John Salmons scored a career-high 32 points for the Kings, who led by as much as 24 points and handed the Knicks a fifth successive defeat.

The Knicks lost by double digits for an NBA-high 15th time. Starting forward Zach Randolph was ejected with 1:47 left in the third quarter after tossing his headband toward the referee.

Ron Artest is expected to miss three to four weeks after five bone chips were removed from his right elbow earlier Wednesday in New York. The Kings are already without leading scorer Kevin Martin and starting point guard Mike Bibby, with all three due back sometime this month.

Jazz 110, 76ers 107

In Salt Lake City, newly-acquired Kyle Korver made five free throws in the final 27 seconds against his former team to help Utah hold off Philadelphia.

Carlos Boozer scored 22 points and Deron Williams had a season-high 20 assists for the Jazz.

The Sixers cut Utah's lead to 105-103 in the final minute but Korver's free throws quelled Philadelphia's rally.

The Jazz won for the fourth time in their past five home games.

Hornets 95, Clippers 81

In Los Angeles, David West had 29 points and 10 rebounds as New Orleans broke open a tight game in the third quarter to beat Los Angeles.

Chris Paul added 16 points and 13 assists for the surging Hornets, who outrebounded the Clippers 46-33 and made 25 of 27 foul shots while winning for the sixth time in seven games.

The Clippers have lost eight of their past nine home games.

Isiah Thomas vows to turn Knicks around

NEW YORK (AP)—Isiah Thomas is still talking about winning championships -- with many of the same players that currently comprise one of the worst teams in the NBA.

And the same coach.

"I know people will laugh even more at me, but I'm hell bent on getting this accomplished and making sure that we get it done," Thomas said Wednesday night the New York Knicks' 107-97 loss to the Sacramento Kings. "And I'm not leaving until we get it done."

The Knicks fell to 8-22, last in the Atlantic Division and ahead of only Miami in the Eastern Conference.

Still, Thomas, also the team president, said he doesn't expect the Knicks to be active before the Feb. 21 trade deadline—apparently because he doesn't think they need to be.

"I believe in (the team) and I believe that this is also the time that you can make serious mistakes with your roster that could set you back another three, four years," Thomas said. "We have good talent, we have good players, we have young players.

"We have a good nucleus and we just (need) them to play well together. It's not about breaking them up or tearing them down, it's about getting them to play better as a team."

Thomas arrived as team president in December 2003 and is in his second season as Knicks coach. New York has made only one playoff appearance since his arrival, getting swept by New Jersey in 2004, and speculation is rampant that Thomas' job is in jeopardy.

"I believe that one day we will win a championship here," Thomas said. "And I believe a couple of these guys will be a part of that. And I believe I'll be a part of that."

That would be up to Madison Square Garden chairman James Dolan, who hasn't spoken publicly since giving Thomas a multiyear extension last March. But Thomas isn't talking like a man who thinks he's on the way out.

"This is a dark time for us," he said. "But I know that there's a light at the end of this tunnel and I'm going to keep digging, and I'm going to keep pushing, and I'm not going to quit. I'm going to do it here."

Plenty of New Yorkers would disagree. Fans routinely chant for Thomas to be fired during Knicks games, and last month a group held a giant pink slip during a rally to express those wishes.

But Thomas said he wants to be remembered in New York as he is in Detroit, where he led the Pistons to two NBA championships during a Hall of Fame playing career.

"I don't necessarily just want to win a championship. I want to leave something that's going to stand for a long time. I want to leave a legacy, I want to leave tradition," Thomas said. "I want to leave an imprint, a blueprint in terms of how people play, and how they coach and how they respond when they put on the Knick uniform.

"And I want to leave what I left in Detroit. Every person that walks through that door as a Piston, when they put on that uniform, there's a certain pride that they carry. And I want to put that here and I want to leave that here in New York. I want to leave a championship legacy."

Schools, federations asked to submit calendar of events

The Division of Sports and Recreation is requesting all private and public schools, and sports clubs, federations, and associations to submit their schedule of events for 2008.

DSR administrative officer II Elias Rangamar said DSR director Joe Lizama and the entire gym staff would like to properly schedule the usage of the Ada gym to everyone.

"The Ada gym is a public facility. Anyone can use it but the problem is scheduling. Sometimes all the events are bunched up in one month, so in order to avoid confusion, we need to schedule it properly," Rangamar said.

DSR staff Daisy Wabol said they are requiring all of those groups who plan to use the gym in 2008 to submit their schedule not later than next week. "So that we would be able to schedule them accordingly and not disrupt any event that might be happening at the same time."

The deadline of the submission of the calendar of events is on Jan. 10.

Rangamar added that the DSR staff would go over each event that the sports federations submitted to avoid overlapping on their schedules for the usage of the gym.

"Priority will be given to the events that happened last year. We all wanted to give everyone the fair chance to use the gym that is why we are requesting for everyone's cooperation," Rangamar said.

You can email your calendar of events to Rangamar at eli_rang@yahoo.com or to Wabol at dvk_wabol@yahoo.com or fax them at 664-2510. ***(Jon Perez)***

Roach promises a new Pacquiao in rematch

BOXING

MANILA, Philippines— Everything that could've possibly gone right for Manny Pacquiao in his first fight against Juan Manuel Marquez happened in the first round.

That's why Marquez can pretty much expect Pacquiao to try and beat him up early when the two sluggers meet again in Las Vegas on March 15 (March 16 in Manila).

"Well the thing is, we had so much success early in the last fight," American trainer Freddie Roach said in an interview with www.boxingtalk.com. "We aren't going to completely abandon that, of course. We might just jump on this guy again."

Pacquiao floored Marquez thrice in the first round during their first meeting in 2004, but the Mexican rallied to salvage a controversial draw. Both fighters still insist they won the fight, setting up the rematch dubbed as Last Man Standing.

Roach, however, said that Marquez will be facing a different Pacquiao than the one he counter-punched against four years ago—for two reasons.

"We are going to jump on him with both hands this time," Roach said, a reference to the fact that the Filipino ring icon had relied too much on his jackhammer left against the Mexican the first time around.

Roach also vowed that Marquez won't be facing the same Pacquiao who tried to finish him off after that phenomenal first round, resulting in an open defense that allowed the Mexican to exploit his edge in technique and counter-punching.

"[Pacquiao] is a much more settled down fighter now," said Roach. "He thinks a lot more, and the biggest change is that he has a right hand as well as a left hand now. He's a smarter fighter now as well."

Roach said he is bringing in different counter-punchers to serve as sparring partners for Pacquiao when they open camp at the Wild Card gym in Los Angeles on Jan. 15.

Among those partners could be reigning OPBF lightweight champion Randy Suico, who might soon find himself in the undercard of Pacquiao-Marquez II.

Suico is being groomed to challenge World Boxing Council lightweight king David Diaz, the same fighter Pacquiao is being penciled to take on late this year. ***(PDI)***

LARRY

From Page 44

catch up with him at Laolao Bay Golf Resort and the players that finished 1-4 in the open category were not eligible to play in the Ace of Aces.

Aside from bringing home the bacon, Larry also was named the most improved golfer of 2007. According to SGA, Larry's first two games were in the 100s but he eventually shot consistently in the 80s and 90s.

Other awards given out were highest gross to Matias Chargualaf (117 gross), highest net to Mariano Fajardo (91 net), most monthly tournaments played to Larry, Balakrishna, and Art DL Guerrero (12), most consistent player to Balakrishna (1.8 average), longest drive to Rick Kautz (five LDs), most greens to Balakrishna (seven), most birdies to Kautz (200), most eagles and lowest net to Ned Norita (1 and 65 net), and lowest gross to Manibusan (74).

In the longest drive at Kingfisher Golf Links the winners were Norita (hole No. 7) and Martin Sablan (hole No. 14). At Laolao Bay Golf Resort, Ray San Nicolas won both holes (nine and 18), while Teach fired a hole-in-one in No. 17.

Greenies awards went to John Cruz (hole No. 3), Manny Alvarez (hole No. 8), Tony DL Guerrero (hole No. 12), and Manibusan (hole No. 15) at the Kingfisher Golf Links.

San Nicolas (hole No. 3), Alvarez (hole No. 7), Art DL Guerrero (hole No. 13), and Teack (hole No. 17) were the winners of the greenies at Laolao Bay Golf Resort.

JUNIOR

From Page 44

from Nino Feria, Tristan Ecalnea, Melvin Cadiang, Roe Sarmiento, Ian Leyco, and J.P. Villanueva.

Feria added 13 points in the Sonics' 58-56 win over the Sixers, while Ecalnea and Cadiang combined for 17 markers.

Roxanne Duenas paced the Sixers with 16 points while Josh Duenas added 10 more. Scott Blewit and Noki Lizama scored a combined 16 points.

Ecalnea again finished in double figures with 14 points in the Sonics' 98-38 thrashing of the Lil' Sonics to again provide scoring support to Salem.

Sarmiento had 14 markers while Leyco and Villanueva contributed 10 apiece.

Darren Gabrido scored 10 points to become the lone Lil' Sonics player that finished in double digits, while Min Seong Kim had eight markers and Michael Cenir and Nathan Oei tallied six each.

It was the second loss for the Lil' Sonics after suffering a 39-65 whipping from the G-Stars in the second game.

Jake Deleon Guerrero netted 15 points to lead the G-Stars' balanced scoring. Joseph Jung and Lia Rangamar tallied nine apiece, while Kaylani Lebria finished with eight markers.

Cenir paced the Lil' Sonics with 10 points while Gabrido chipped in eight markers.

In the other first day match yesterday, the visiting Team Tinian of coach Keith Nabors pulled off a 49-34 decision against the Grace Christian Academy Eagles.

Dennis Borja, Demetrius Pettis, and Ian Pascua took charge for Tinian's scoring as they combined for almost of their team's points. Borja led Tinian with 14 points while Pettis and Pascua scored 13 and 12 markers.

Edward Angelo paced the Eagles with 10 points, while Lesther Vertudes and Genesis Michael combined for 14 points.

The Sixers were still playing Tinian at press time. Other games that were being played as of this writing are the G-Stars-Eagles and Junior Sonics-Tinian matches.

Today's games will start at 8am with the Eagles facing the Sixers, while the G-Stars take on Tinian at 9:30am. The 11am contest will have the Junior Sonics clashing with the Eagles while the Sixers collide with the G-Stars at 12:30pm.

The Lil' Sonics will meet Tinian in the 2pm match, while the Junior Sonics will duke it out against the G-Stars at 3:30pm. The Lil' Sonics will end the games when they face the Eagles at 5pm.

Saturday's lone game will have the Sixers playing against the Lil' Sonics for the final match in the elimination round. The consolation match will take place at 10am with the third and fourth place teams battling for the third place trophy while the top two squads clash for the title in the 11:30am finals.

First Game

Junior Sonics 58 – Salem 19, Feria 13, Ecalnea 9, Cadiang 8, Villanueva 4, Sarmiento 3, Darag 2.

San Antonio Sixers 56 – R. Duenas 16, J. Duenas 10, Blewit 8, Lizama 8, Eubank 6, M. Duenas 4, Castro 2, Villagomez 2.

Scoring by halves: 35-22. 58-56.

Second Game

G-Stars 65 – Deleon Guerrero 15, Jung 9, Rangamar 9, Lebria 8, Jac. Palacios 6, Ichihara 4, A. Manalili 4, Santos 4, M. Manalili 2, Jas. Palacios 2, Reyes 2.

Lil' Sonics 39 – Cenir 10, Gabrido 8, Roberto 6, Aranda 4, Villanueva 3, Bicera 2, Escalada 2, Feria 2, Tiamzon 2.

Scoring by halves: 26-10, 65-39.

Third Game

Tinian 49 – Borja 14, De. Pettis 13, Pascua 12, Palacios 4, Da. Pettis 4, Hofschneider 2.

GCA Eagles 34 – Angelo 10, Vertodes 8, Michael 6, Lester 4, Daniel 2, Orejola 2, Roberto 2.

Scoring by halves: 22-18, 49-34.

Fourth Game

Junior Sonics 98 – Salem 22, Ecalnea 14, Sarmiento 12, Leyco 10, Villanueva 10, Pangelinan 8, Cadiang 6, Feria 6, Sula 6, Darag 4.

Lil' Sonics 38 – Gabrido 10, Kim 8, Cenir 6, Oei 6, Tiamzon 4, Escalada 2, Roberto 2.

Scoring by halves: 50-10, 98-38.

D9ERS

From Page 44

run in the bottom of the first to allow himself and Jeon Soo Hwan, who reached first base on an error, touch home plate.

George Castro and Greg Camacho alternated with the pitching chores for D9ers. Castro pitched two innings giving up that two-run jack but shut down the Dreams after that.

Camacho pitched two innings in relief allowing two hits while striking out five batters and walking one more.

Two more make-up games will be played today and on Saturday. The games were the rained out matches last Nov. 11 and Nov. 24.

Today, Team Rubak will face the Tigers at 6:30pm. Tomorrow, Jan. 5, the Dreams battle the Tigers at 10am while Rubak clashes with the D9ers at 1pm.

After the make-up games of the elimination round, the playoff round begins on Jan. 12, Saturday, next week with the team that won the pennant facing the fourth-ranked squad, while the second seed takes on No. 3.

The winners of the playoffs will then move on to the one-game finals on Jan. 19, Saturday, while the losers play for the consolation match.

WOMEN'S

From Page 44

ule at the AMP Field.

Becca Newman, who is one of the organizers of the 7-on-7 league, said the boot camp is designed to introduce rookie female players to football. "And [at the same time] to hone the skills of the more experienced players."

Organizers will no longer purchase uniforms to keep the entrance fee low and players can use any sports attire that is comfortable with them. The registration fee will be determined soon.

Newman is encouraging all female players that competed in last season's recreational league to sign up. "[We also] challenge them to bring along one new friend to the sport. No experience necessary to play."

In the new league, each team will play with seven players including the goalkeeper. The league intends to let the players focus on improving their skills in a faster-pace game than the recreational league.

"Because the [7-on-7] league will stress improvement and development of players, game results will not be recorded," Newman said.

Last month, Newman was part of a seven-player team that competed in a similar 7-on-7 tournament on Guam. The team finished third in the two tournaments they competed in, the other one being Futsal where Newman was named the best keeper of the games.

Aside from Newman, Emily Gries, Zoe Jewell, Brenda Schultz, Katie Peters, Madison Schultz and Alleny Tenorio where the other members of the team.

For more information about the 7-on-7 league, email Newman at rnewman112@hotmail.com or Vanessa Pritchard at holly_jollyvkp@hotmail.com.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	27	3	.900	_
Toronto	17	15	.531	11
New Jersey	15	16	.484	12 1/2
Philadelphia	14	18	.438	14
New York	8	22	.267	19

Southeast Division

Orlando	22	12	.647	_
Atlanta	15	14	.517	4 1/2
Washington	15	15	.500	5
Charlotte	11	19	.367	9
Miami	8	24	.250	13

Central Division

Detroit	25	7	.781	_
Cleveland	15	17	.469	10
Indiana		15	18	.455
10 1/2				
Chicago	12	18	.400	12
Milwaukee	12	19	.387	12 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	21	8	.724	_
Dallas	21	11	.656	1 1/2
New Orleans	21	11	.656	1 1/2
Houston	15	17	.469	7 1/2
Memphis	9	22	.290	13

Northwest Division

Denver	18	12	.600	_
Portland	19	13	.594	_
Utah	18	16	.529	2
Seattle	9	22	.290	9 1/2
Minnesota	4	27	.129	14 1/2

Pacific Division

Phoenix	22	9	.710	_
L.A. Lakers	19	11	.633	2 1/2
Golden State	19	14	.576	4
Sacramento	12	18	.400	9 1/2
L.A. Clippers	10	20	.333	11 1/2

Yesterday's Games

New Jersey 96, Orlando 95
Memphis 90, Indiana 72
Detroit 106, Washington 93
Cleveland 98, Atlanta 94
Chicago 109, Charlotte 97
Milwaukee 103, Miami 98
Boston 97, Houston 93
Sacramento 107, New York 97
Portland 90, Minnesota 79
Dallas 121, Golden State 99
Utah 110, Philadelphia 107
New Orleans 95, L.A. Clippers 81

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

Masters Baseball Standings

D-9ers	7	1
Rubak	6	1
Tigers	1	6
Korean Dreams	1	7

Saipan sports resolutions for New Year

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR
and JON PEREZ
REPORTER

New Year is upon us and what better way to start 2008 than to roll out the list of resolutions sports associations here on Saipan would like to fulfill in the next 365 days.

The list varies from the practical (train harder and smarter) to personal (hit a ton 80) to controversial (no more intrigues and rumors), to Quixotic (change the way volleyball is played).

In the swimming side, to train harder and smarter and hopefully to qualify for the Junior Olympics in Japan this spring.

Other than that, I would aim to be a better member of my family, my church, the swim team, and the local community.

Rezne Wong
Tsunami Saipan swimmer

We are trying to improve our swimming skill and moral education in each level (from beginner course to competitive course) this year. Also we are going to develop more competitive swimmers who are able to participate in swim meets.

We believe setting the bar higher each and after meet is very important in sports.

If there in no new level to reach, there will be no improvement.

The year 2008 is Tsunami Saipan's first year. We will try to make it an unforgettable first year—like the first steps of a baby.

Hiro Kimura
Tsunami Saipan coach

BANMI's New Year resolution is to have more basketball leagues and tournaments for 2008. By having more basketball leagues and tournaments we will be able to give more exposure to our players who are and will be playing for the CNMI National Team for both men's and women's. With the exposure, our players will be ready for the tough competition when we go off-island. Also we need to get more people involved with the sport of basketball from the table officials who are doing the stats, scoreboard, shot clock.

We are also encouraging more our youth to participate on this program by helping us out with the table. We are also encouraging those who would like to become game officials such as referees to come and get some training, especially the youth. We need more local referees to help us call the games.

BANMI is also planning to have a basketball coaches association, table officials association same as what we have with the CNMI Referees Association.

Abner Venus
BANMI board member

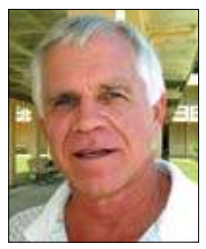
We want to continue bringing the multi-sport mavens of the Marianas a myriad of ways to enjoy living a healthy lifestyle in world's best location to swim, bike, and run.

Why? Because people who take the time to watch their diet and train on their off-time deserve a measuring stick to gauge their progress as well as an outlet for their competitive spirit.

Brad Ruszala
NMITF president

New Year's resolution? Change the way this kind of team net sport (volleyball) is played.

For almost 100 years, the Federation International de Volleyball (FIVB) has unsuccessfully managed this kind of team net sport. They couldn't think their way through a thought when they switched from the side-out scoring system and shot themslves in the foot when they implemented the rally point system. They changed volleyball from a picnic sport to a sport for sissies. And that is why the sport needs to be changed.



Jim Feger
Rocball founder

For SEDA (Saipan Electronic Darts Association) hopefully we would really get good sportsmanship this season—I think some players believe our trophies are worth a million dollars.

I also want to see more players this season and more teams participate.

Personally, I would really like to hit a ton 80 this season.

For the Saipan Billiards Association, I would really like to have more local players.

I would also like to have teams get together and play off-island—Tinian, Rota, and Guam.

Charlotte Tenepere
SEDA and SBA league secretary

Promote the CNMI as a world-class diving destination. Get the skatepark built before June 2008. Add professional volleyball players for the Marianas Cup from Russia, China, or Australia—adding the 14-and-under event the weekend before the Cup means that we will have a full week of volleyball fun—also known as Marianas Cup Beach Volleyball Festival.

See a 10-percent increase in participation in the Saipan Marathon and a successful first ever Coffee Trail Run—also known as Winter Festival of Runs. See a 10-percent increase in the XTERRA and Tagaman events—also known as Sportsfest Week.

Laurie Peterka
Micro Games beach volleyball silver medalist

I wish that the various golf clubs [in the CNMI] would get together and sponsor an island-wide golf fundraiser to benefit the Commonwealth Health Centers Medical Referral and Dialysis programs. I believe these two programs benefit our community [the] most.

Pete Igitol
Saipan Rotary Club member

The Saipan Major League wish for the coming year is that the SML should take on a more active role in the development of youth baseball players in the CNMI as well as ensuring that the SML season remains intact for the enjoyment of our seasonal players. Place "league adviser" before Tan Ko's name.

We also wish that veteran adult players volunteer their time to coach the youth during the SML summer/fall season. This is a developmental program where these youngsters are given the opportunity to compete and excel against much older players and the involvement of these prospective coaches would definitely have an impact on [our young players].

Lastly, on behalf of Saipan Major League president Rose Igitol, vice-president Bob Coldeen, and Tan Ko Palacios, we would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year!

Tony Rogolifoi
SML coordinator

First priority is to work harder for my family, especially for my wife and daughter. Second, get on going the Saipan International Raceway park project done so that we all could have motor sports racing action going. I also want to finish up all the projects in my garage that has been collecting dust.

Third, to cut down on drinking and smoking and finally plan ahead for a better living because of our economic situation.

Kazu Ikeda
President, Commonwealth Racing Federation and Marianas Automotor Sports Association

My New Year's Resolution is to pursue some sort of career in either beach volleyball or indoor volleyball. I've had such a great time with the traveling experience for volleyball that I would love to do it again!

Nina Mosley
Former national swimmer and CNMI beach volleyball national team member

My wish is for the Northern Marianas Badminton Federation's membership to grow and that someday the CNMI would have a local badminton team composed of young and talented players that would represent the islands in international tournaments. I hope more local players, especially the youth, would play badminton.

I am also hoping that in 2008 all NMBF members would remain united under one common goal and that is to play and promote badminton in the CNMI. No more intrigues and rumors.

I also wish that all NMBF members be cooperative on whatever decision the NMBF board makes. To strengthen the foundation of the group and the friendship and camaraderie of all members increase. I hope for more tournaments to come and more sponsors to help the NMBF.

For the CNMI, I wish that Saipan's economy would turn for the better and more tourists would visit our islands. For myself, I wish to improve more with my playing skills and hope to meet more new friends.

Diane Dar Juan
Ex-NMBF secretary and singles champion

Budweiser Cup returns to action today

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

BANMI Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands

Games in the 2007-2008 season of the BANMI Budweiser Cup Men's Island-wide Basketball League resume today offering two make-up matches starting at 7pm.

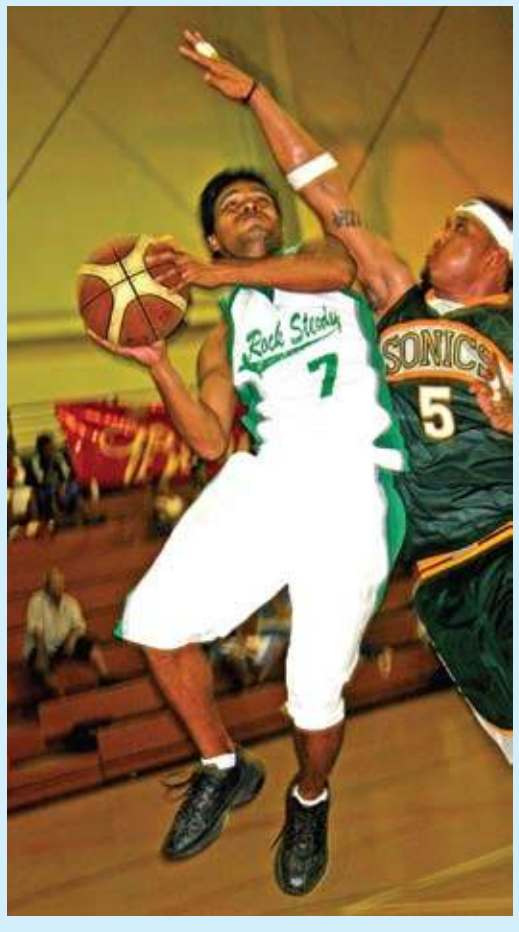
The elimination round matches will end on Jan. 9 and the playoffs begin on Jan. 14 with Ol'Aces, which won the pennant, waiting for their opponent.

Friday's game will have the Runnin' Rebels, who are still in the hunt for a playoff spot, clashing with Lali IV at 7pm followed by the Southern Sonics-PTI/FMI match at 8:30pm.

On Saturday, winless Proa guns for its first win against the Junior Nationals at 6pm, while PTI/FMI battles the D-1 Ulloa's in the 7:30pm contest.

The Runnin' Rebels take on Proa in the 7pm first game on Jan. 7, while the Bombers square off against the Junior Nationals in the 8:30pm second game.

The Runnin' Rebels and Rock Steady close out their regular season matches when they take on separate foes on Jan. 9. Rebels battle the Junior Nationals at 7pm, while Rock Steady faces the Marianas Health Services G-Rollers I in the 8:30pm nightcap.



MARK RABAGO
Freddy Pelisamen of Rock Steady collides in mid-air with the Southern Sonics' Peter Mendiola during their game in the 2007 BANMI-Budweiser Cup Men's Island-wide Basketball Leauge.

The games are crucial for PTI/FMI, the Bombers, G-Rollers I, Runnin' Rebels, and the D-1 Ulloas since they are still fighting for playoff spots. One loss could dampen their chances of advancing in the next round.

Ol'Aces won the pennant after finishing with an 11-1 record. Their lone loss came in the hands of the Saipan Stevedore Suns, 87-85, on Nov. 9, 2007.

The Suns finished the elimination round with a 10-2 record, while Rock Steady is currently in third with a 9-2 mark. Sonics, 8-3, and Junior Nationals, 6-3, are in fourth and fifth spots.

Ol'Aces, Suns, Rock Steady, Sonics, and Rock Steady are already assured of playoff berths.

The Top 8 teams will then move on to the playoff round where matches begin on Jan. 14, Monday. The top seed battles No. 8, while the second-ranked squad clashes with No. 7.

No. 3 meets No. 6 while No. 4 and No. 5 fight for the final semifinal spot on Jan. 16, Wednesday. The championship game is scheduled on Jan. 30 and if necessary, Feb. 1.

Budweiser Cup resumes today

Games in the 2007-2008 season of the BANMI Budweiser Cup Men's Island-wide Basketball League resume today offering two make-up matches starting at 7pm.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Mountaineers slam Sooners in Fiesta Bowl

Rich who? The West Virginia Mountaineers didn't need coach Rich Rodriguez. They had Pat White, and their elusive quarterback led them to a surprising 48-28 romp.

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Saipan Golf Association 2007 Ace of Aces champion Larry I. DL Guerrero is all smiles after receiving his trophy.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Larry Legend is 2007 Ace of Aces

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Larry I. DL Guerrero won the 2007 Ace of Aces of the Saipan Golf Association after besting 12 other monthly champions in the two-day tournament held in two separate golf venues last Dec. 2 and Dec. 15.

Guerrero edged Tony DL Guerrero by a stroke after the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. employee tamed the greens and fairways of Kingfisher Golf Links and Laolao Bay Golf Resort with a net of 145.

Larry shot a 46 in the front and a 45 in the back at the Talafofo facility to finish with a gross of 91, which after his 19 handicap was deducted, gave him an even net of 72 in the first day of competition.

The 17-handicap Tony, meanwhile, fired a 73 at Kingfisher Golf Links on Dec. 2 after registering 48 and 42 in the 18 holes to card a gross of 90.

With his namesake breathing down his neck, Larry played cautiously in the final 18 holes at the Laolao Bay Golf Resort last Dec. 15, shooting a 45 and 47 in the front and back nines to end up with a gross of 92, which equaled a 73 net.

Luckily for Larry, Tony could do no better than him at the Kagman facility, settling for a gross of 90 (43-47) that left him a stroke short of equaling Larry's net score.

The one-stroke loss cost Tony gravely as he wound up in fifth place in the open category—only the 12 monthly par-busters in the Ace of Aces vied for the annual plum but all 21 members that took part in the yearned competition were eligible to win in the open category.

He dropped to fifth place overall after non-monthly winners—Steve Balakrishna (131 net), Jung Teack (133), Tony Camacho (140), and retired presiding judge Edward Manibusan (143)—all finished with superior net scores than him.

Larry said he was extremely happy with his Ace of Aces victory. He said he was just fortunate enough that Tony didn't

See LARRY on Page 42

D9ers clobber Dreams, 36-2

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

Saipan Stevedore D9ers continued to bring nightmares to the Korean Dreams' 2007 season in the Masters Baseball League.

D9ers' handed the Viva Poker-sponsored Dreams a 36-2 clobbering in Wednesday night's make-up game at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

The win was the seventh straight for the D9ers after losing its opening game against Team Rubak on Nov. 4. The D9ers never lost ever since handing their tormentors a 15-6 clipping on Dec. 15.

So overpowering were D9ers that they peppered dreams pitcher Mun Jun with 27 hits three of which were home runs.

Ben Mesa led the D9ers' hit parade going 5-for-6 where he scored five runs, had two triples, blasted one home run, and had seven RBIs. He opened up with an RBI triple in the top of the first inning and followed it up by blasting a three-run home run in the third.

Mesa again delivered in the fourth with an RBI single to let Joe Tenorio reach home plate and ended his hitting streak with an RBI triple in the D9ers' 16-run fifth inning.

Ben Lizama and Tony Camacho, who each had a home run, went 4-for-4 each scoring a combined eight runs. Lizama also had a triple while Camacho had a double.

Tony Luzama went 5-for-5, all singles, with five runs and five RBIs.

John Terlaje was the lone bright spot for the Dreams blasting a two-run home

See D9ERS on Page 42

Junior Sonics in early lead of Holiday Hoops

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

The Junior Sonics scored consecutive wins yesterday at the start of the 4th Annual 14-and-under Christmas Basketball Tournament at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Sonics, as of press time, were playing Tinian as they aim for an opening day sweep of their games to move to two games of winning all of their five games in the single-elimination round format.

The Sonics opened up with a hard-earned 58-56 win over the San Antonio Sixers in the morning then followed it up with a 98-38 crushing of sister squad Lil' Sonics later in the afternoon.

Nicko Salem led the Sonics' scoring in both games tallying 19 and 22 points each, while getting plenty of offensive support

See JUNIOR on Page 42

JON PEREZ
Demetrius Pettis tries to get past the defense of a San Antonio Sixers player in their game yesterday in the 4th Annual 14-and-under Christmas Basketball Tournament at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Women's soccer to open 7-on-7 league

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

Fresh from a successful Women's Recreational Football League, the Women's Football Committee of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association will hold a 7-on-7 league tentatively scheduled to open on Jan. 26.

Preparations are underway for the league, which will run for almost two months with the finals taking place by early March.

Registration for the league begins on Jan. 12 from 9am to 11am at American Memorial Park where the first day of the boot camp will also take place. The final day of the boot camp will be on Jan. 19 and will follow the same sched-

See WOMEN'S on Page 42

KURT MAXBERRY
A Guam player, center, tries to get past the defense of four CNMI players in a football tournament last month in Guam.